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**Social Representation and Rural Development: Transformation in governance,
institutions, and livelihoods in response to emerging global markets for
medicinal plants in the Indian Himalayas**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Anthropology
2013**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides an examination of how NGOs, village people, government agencies and donor agencies participate in a conservation and development intervention termed ecodevelopment. It also examines the creation of a space that has come to be known as the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP), which is located in Kullu District, Himachal Pradesh, India. Field data was collected from villages located in Tirthan Valley, which lies adjacent to the GHNP.

I divide this dissertation into five central chapters: a review of colonial interests in forestry; a discussion of the contemporary conditions for forestry; an analysis of rural livelihoods and transformation; an examination of the conservation and development interventions centred on medicinal plant trade in Tirthan valley; and finally an analysis of how conservation and development projects are brokered to produce 'success'. I argue that by defining conservation and development issues so that they can be solved by specific expertise, organizations did not adequately recognize the political and historical context in which interventions take place, nor the structural conditions and existing relationships between the variety of actors and stakeholders. Institutions and people responsible for development and conservation programs did not examine their own practices as potentially responsible for the further marginalization of people and shaping the outcome of project activities. What commonly occurs is that village people are blamed for their inability to remedy their own conditions, and in response attempts are made to modify village people's behaviour so that they are compliant with government and donor organization mandates for development and conservation. What was observed in Tirthan valley was that a series of brokers negotiated the outcomes of interventions so that the project was perceived as successfully improving the lives of "poor forest dependent villagers".

With this research I demonstrate the potential of ethnography in understanding interventions. Using an ethnographic lens to understand existing research and the field site provided vital insight on rationalities and forms of knowledge, and how a combination of political ecology, political economy and history come together to shape practice. An ethnographic approach allowed me to explore how subjectivities were produced in the complex conjunctures where multiple powers come together, how critical practice emerged, and how they motivated new attempts to govern.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Name
ANT	Actor Network Theory
CF	Conservator of Forests
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
DC	District Commissioner
DfID	Department for International Development
DFO	Divisional Forest Officer
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GHNP	Great Himalaya National Park
GO	Group Organizer
HP	Himachal Pradesh
HPFSR	Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Reform
ICDP	Integrated Conservation and Development
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Program
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JFM	Joint Forest Management
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MPPA	Medicinal Plant Propagation Areas
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
SDM	Superintendent District Magistrate
UA	Uttaranchal
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Development and Trade
VDC	Village Development Committees
VFDC	Village Forest Development Committee
WSCG	Women Savings and Credit Groups

A NOTE ON NAMES, SPELLINGS AND CITATIONS

Names of all respondents and villages in Tirthan valley have been changed to protect their privacy.

In colonial documents the spelling is ‘Kulu’; however since then the spelling has become ‘Kullu’. I use “Kullu”, unless I am citing a document in which the spelling is ‘Kulu’.

Inter-office memoranda appear as footnotes on pages where they are presented, all other cited works appear in the References and Literature Cited section of this dissertation.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	2
ABSTRACT	3
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
A NOTE ON NAMES, SPELLINGS AND CITATIONS	5
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 NFTPs and Conservation: Setting the Context	11
1.1.1 Medicinal Plants.....	12
1.2 Theoretical Considerations	16
1.2.1 Regional Context	16
1.2.2 Political Ecology	18
1.2.3 Conservation Narratives.....	20
1.3 Research Site.....	22
1.4 Methodology	26
1.5 Plan of the Dissertation.....	31
CHAPTER 2 SHAPING PRIORITIES: A HISTORICAL REVIEW	35
2.1 Economic Forestry in Himachal Pradesh: Timber Production	38
2.2 Forest Settlements: Reshaping Forest Use and Access.....	41
2.3 Settlements in Kullu: 1886 Anderson Settlement Report.....	44
2.4 Where have all the forests gone?	48
2.5 Different Departments, Different Priorities	53
2.6 Minor Forest Products to Non Timber Forest Products.....	57
2.7 Conclusions.....	59
CHAPTER 3 CONTEMPORARY FORESTRY: DECENTRALIZATION.....	62
3.1 Defining Decentralization.....	65
3.2 Decentralizing Forestry.....	66
3.3 Contemporary Conditions of Forestry	69
3.4 The Mission: Managing forests and revamping forest policy	70
3.5 Decentralizing Forest Management: The Making of VFDCs.....	73
3.5.1 Forming VFDCs.....	79
3.6 Decentralization and Medicinal Plants	83
3.7 Understanding Decentralization.....	86
3.8 Conclusion	89
CHAPTER 4 RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN TRANSITION.....	91
4.1 Understanding <i>Pahari</i> Society	94
4.1.1 Caste Systems	98
4.2 Farm Economy	101
4.3 Gender, Cultivation, and Resource Use.....	106
4.4 Rural Transformation.....	109
4.5 Conclusions.....	114
CHAPTER 5 MEDICINAL PLANTS: ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY.....	116

5.1	Framing the Issue	117
5.2	Understanding the Trade and the Commodity Chain	118
5.3	The Collectors: Migrants and Village Men	121
5.3.1	High Altitude Medicinal Plants	122
5.3.2	Morel Mushrooms (<i>Morchella esculanta</i>)	124
5.4	Local Knowledge	129
5.5	Middlemen: Traders and Shopkeepers.....	132
5.6	Status and Interest in Medicinal Plants	137
5.7	Conservation by Commercialization.....	139
5.8	Conclusions	144
CHAPTER 6 BROKERING ECODEVELOPMENT SUCCESS		146
6.1	Integrated Conservation and Development: Background.....	148
6.2	From ICDPs to India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP)	150
6.3	Conservancy in Tirthan Valley: The early years	151
6.4	Resisting Development and Conservation	154
6.5	Ecodevelopment in Tirthan Valley	155
6.6	Brokers and Translators: Clarifications and Definitions	157
6.7	SAHARA: Making Conservation Happen.....	159
6.8	Group Organizers (GOs): Engaging Beneficiaries in the Project Paradigm.....	164
6.9	Women Saving Credit Groups (WSCG): Conserving and Saving	168
6.10	Disseminating Project Success	173
6.10.1	Medicinal Plants Propagation Areas (MPPAs).....	174
6.11	Creating the Client	179
6.12	Conclusions	181
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS		183
7.1	Creating a Successful Conservation and Development Project	186
CHAPTER 8 REFERENCES AND WORKS CITED		194
APPENDIX A MAP OF DISTRICTS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH		236
APPENDIX B MAP OF KULLU DISTRICT		238
APPENDIX C MAP OF GREAT HIMALAYA NATIONAL PARK		239
APPENDIX D GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, NOTIFICATION NO. FFE-B-G (9)-9/94-II		241
APPENDIX E LIST OF HERBS AND OTHER NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCE ON WHICH CONTROL IS GIVEN TO THE CONCERNED PANCHAYAT		242

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2000 I conducted fieldwork in Nepal for which I explored costs and benefits associated with community forestry, until this time I had never spent much time in a village carrying out fieldwork. My time in a small mountain village in Nepal allowed me, for the first time, to observe and learn of the number of negotiations that take place between and within governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and village people to maintain forest access and use-rights in an evolving political climate. In 2003 I had the opportunity to lead field research in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, and I examined how land related conflict impacted women's use and access to these resources. This study gave me the opportunity to learn how to collect peoples' stories and set them within a resource-rights framework. As I continued to work on assignments that studied the intersection of community development and environment, I began to wonder if poverty would ever be reduced substantially – enough to really make a difference, or were we simply refiguring inequality, albeit inadvertently, through NGOs, Women Savings and Credit Groups (WSCGs), Village Development Committees (VDCs), and the like? I wondered how priorities and requirements for international development, that were discussed and identified in conference rooms of offices in the Western world, were being received by the developing world, and at the village level. How were rural people, living worlds away from where policies were being crafted, responding to these policies and agendas for development?

This dissertation looks at an integrated conservation and development effort centred on medicinal plants in Himachal Pradesh to examine how NGOs, village people and government agencies participate in contracts to produce representations of project success. It also examines the “production of space” that has come to be known as the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP). By “production of space” I mean the way that space is appropriated, controlled, understood, represented, and the creation of representations to manage that space (Harvey 1990:218-225). I examine conservation and development initiatives coupled with GHNP as a ‘rich site of cultural production’ (Brosius 1999:277), as well as a rich site of spatial production (Lefebvre 1991).

This dissertation provides an anthropological critique of conservation and

development projects. Using history and ethnography, I examine ideologies and practices related to forest use and contemporary interests in conservation and development, as expressed by people and entities associated with the GHNP. I attempt to understand how the state's commercial interests in forestry have impacted livelihoods. I also explore conservation practitioners' reliance on Western-derived notions of nature and conservation to understand rural landscapes in the East. My intention is to shed light on how western ideas around conservation are absorbed by people whose every day is shaped by drastically different priorities in terms of environment and resource management. Local residents, biologists, development practitioners, tourists, and researchers engage in practices and have ideas that are produced by multiple and wide ranging influences: the local and the regional; the national, international, transnational, and global. These influences intertwine in place, in culture and in politics, creating connections between people and between people and their natural environment. I use historic and ethnographic analysis to understand stories of everyday day life and existence.

The relationship between anthropology and NGOs forms a second layer of analysis in this dissertation. Understanding people and the context in which they exist has in the past fallen within the sphere of anthropological inquiry; we now see NGOs speaking for, and on behalf of, people particularly the marginalised. It seems appropriate that NGOs have become a key ethnographic site for anthropology given that they produce and disseminate ideas on relationships between nature, state and society. NGOs have become the entity by which indigenous, native, and local people are known to the outside world and managed by government entities (Dove 1996). These NGOs are then able to act upon the ideas that they have produced as if they are a reality (Carrier & Miller 1998). NGOs create or “broker”¹ project success by maintaining this space between reality and desired outcomes (Lewis & Mosse 2006).

Before I delve further into the dissertation I feel it necessary to provide an overview of interests in non-timber forest products (NTFPs) specifically medicinal plants, and associated conservation and development initiatives; I do this to draw attention to the considerable global interest in this topic. Once I have introduced the commercial significance of medicinal plants I move on to describe the theoretical framework within which I situate this study. I discuss three broad themes that have

¹ A term I borrow from Lewis and Mosse (2006)

been crucial in developing my understanding of medicinal plant trade, conservation and rural livelihoods. This leads to a description of my field-site, which is then followed by description of my research methodology. Finally, I provide a brief outline of the dissertation.

1.1 NTFPs and Conservation: Setting the Context

In the last decade conservation and development organizations have taken a keen interest in NTFPs (Arnold and Ruiz Pérez 1998; Wollenberg and Ingles 1998; Marshall et al. 2003). Why the global interest in NTFPs? NTFPs link to poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation has been frequently cited as a driving force behind development and conservation investment into promoting sustainable use of NTFPs (Golam et al. 2008). Studies have found that NTFPs are a significant aspect of livelihoods for forest dependent communities (Belcher et al. 2005; Marshall et al. 2005); household food security and nutrition (Falconer 1997; Clark and Sunderland 2004); generate additional employment and income (Peters 1996; Marshall et al. 2003); and offer opportunities for NTFP based enterprises (Shackleton and Shackleton 2004; Subedi 2006). Poor and low-income families can access NTFPs more readily than other forest resources, and NTFPs can be harvested with minimal impact to forested lands (Neumann and Hirsch 2000; FAO 2008). International interest in NTFPs gathered momentum when Peter and his colleague's research *Valuation of the Amazonian Rainforest* was first published in the 1989 issues of Nature Magazine. In this article Peters *et al.* claimed that NTFPs provide more income than timber. Since then NTFPs have firmly established their position on the global agenda, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was one of the first international agencies to advocate for NTFPs in sustainable livelihood programs. Subsequently Canadian International Agency (CIDA), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) incorporated NTFPs into their research and development programmes. NTFPs had the potential of bridging development and conservation interests (Belcher 2003), as there was an implicit assumption that making forests more valuable to local users could encourage forest conservation and poverty reduction (Plotkin and Famolare 1992; Schreckenberg et al. 2006; Ahenkan and Boon 2008).

With the introduction of NTFPs into the field of social development a new paradigm was created, one that could potentially bridge two conflicting issues – people’s need for biological resources and international interest in conserving biological resources (Choudhury 2007). By focusing on the commercialization of NTFPs the development community could very well achieve their goals for conservation and development. Commercialization could potentially increase the value of forest resources for local populations and result in reduced poverty and increased human development (Neumann and Hirsch 2000; Marshall et al. 2003; Wunder and Angelsen 2003; Sunderland and Ndoye 2004).

1.1.1 Medicinal Plants

Hundreds of millions of rural households around the world use medicinal plants to remedy ailments. While reliable data are scarce, it has been estimated that in India approximately two million traditional health practitioners use over 7,500 species of medicinal plants (FAO 2001; FAO & DfID 2001). It is widely believed that unsustainable harvesting practices by herb-gatherers, often for commercial purposes, results in the depletion of many medicinal species in otherwise healthy forests (Akerle *et al.* 1991). The transition from subsistence living to a commercialised extraction involves a medicinal plant commodity chain. This commodity chain is lengthened over time to include a multitude of traders as market demand grows; the longer the chain, the lower the rates of return for those at the beginning of the chain. Gatherers of the bark of *Prunus africana* in Madagascar, for example, are paid little in relation to the rates received by middlemen from whom Spanish and French companies buy the bark (Walter & Rokotonirina 1995; Lewington 1993). In Mexico, collectors are reported to receive six per cent of the consumer price for medicinal plants (Parrotta, 2002). With such low rates of compensation it is generally believed that gatherers feel pressured to harvest large volumes of plant material. The low price also discourages cultivation, these plants can be gathered with much less effort from the wild, and the price of the plant, whether cultivated or gathered from the wild, remains the same (Parrotta 2002).

Improved transportation networks in areas of tropical forest biodiversity have increased trade in biological resources, creating national supply chains and collection points for what was previously a locally based market system. A report

from Nepal notes that:

Hundreds of varieties of herbs in all incarnations - leaves, roots, stems, extracts - continue their journey from remote crags to staging posts in the hills and then to the Terai. Through a time-tested network of legal and illegal routes, the bundles and sacks are heaved onto trucks, they hop on international flights, board trains and find berths in cargo vessels (Aryal 1993:376).

The trade is characterized by secrecy and generational control over territory, gatherers and access to purchasers.

New models of trade that work to shorten marketing chains are considered necessary if local gatherers are to obtain fair prices for their work. These new models are also instrumental in order to facilitate willing participation in sustainable harvesting and local cultivation (Olsen *et al.* 1997; GOI 1997). Cooperatives of gatherers supplying directly to manufacturers, or linked chains of local bio-enterprises that combine cultivation with managed wild harvesting and value-added processing, have the potential to shorten marketing chains and increase compensation rates for gathers while also steering them towards sustainable practices (Olsen *et al.* 1997; GOI 1997). Such bio-enterprise development was promoted by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and is thought to be an innovative approach to translating the economic potential of biodiversity into conservation initiatives and sustainable development opportunities (UNCTAD 1998). The 1992 Global Biodiversity Strategy (WRI 1992) stressed the importance of creating incentives for conservation by encouraging local communities to identify and create markets for sustainably harvested wild products. Economists (for example Pearce & Morgan 1994; Pearce *et al.* 1992; McNeely 1988) have argued that those concerned with conservation must demonstrate its economic importance and show that sustainable use of biodiversity has a positive economic value.

In India, which harvests 90 per cent of its medicinal plants from uncultivated sources, there are an estimated 9,000 manufacturing units using almost 1,000 of 7,500 known medicinal species (FRLHT 2002). It is believed that the export of raw material and finished herbal products is valued at around US \$100 million per year (FRLHT, 2002). Increased global demand for medicinal plants has brought traders into contact with international regulatory regimes like the Convention on

International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). These types of initiatives led to worldwide recognition that endangered species cannot be exported, and that conservation and cultivation strategies must be established (Tandon 1997). In 1994, the Government of India banned the export of more than 50 endangered wild species (Subedi 2002). This was subsequently reduced by about a third following strong lobbying from the herbal industry, which argued that such restrictions would damage a lucrative area of India's trade with the West (Subedi 2002).

In Namibia, Devil's Claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*), is harvested by poor and marginal communities for international markets (Hachfeld & Schipmann 2001, Cunningham 1993). *H. procumbens* is now threatened on communal lands because of unsustainable harvesting practices (Lombard 2001). The plants collected are processed in importing countries, not locally, and thus no additional revenue is captured nationally through value addition. To address this situation, a Namibian NGO assists rural communities in assessing the quality of their forest products and in establishing quotas and sustainable harvesting techniques for the production of high-quality outputs (Lombard 2001). Direct access to the market aims to generate as much income as possible for the harvesters in rural and almost exclusively marginalized and poverty-stricken communities.

In South Africa, parts of Asia and the Caribbean, manufactures of herbal medicines and plant-derived pharmaceuticals have entered into contracts with local communities for large- volume production of medicinal species (Cunningham 1993; Lambert *et al.* 1997; Buford *et al.* 2000). Such projects can reduce pressure on wild stocks in the short-term and create new local enterprises (Bodeker 2003; Lange 1996). Agricultural inputs and planting materials are provided, and collectors are offered a guarantee that the plants will be purchased. However, farmers have little control over what plants are grown, how they are grown, and the price at which the crop can be sold. By contrast, cooperative development aims to enable gatherers and small farmers to sell directly to manufacturers through their cooperatives so that they receive a fair price for their produce and in some instances a dividend from cooperative profits (Rastogi 2004).

In Bangalore, India, the Gram Mooligai Company Ltd. (GMCL) was established in 2000 with the goal of increasing equitable participation of rural medicinal plant suppliers (FRLHT 2002). A majority of shares in this company were limited to collectors or cultivators of medicinal plants who supply GMCL directly.

NGO partners organize the collectors and cultivators into small groups that undertake the collection or cultivation of medicinal plants according to industry demand. Training is provided on group formation, sustainable harvesting methods, agro-techniques, cleaning, quality control, accounts and record keeping. Medicinal plant material collected at the village level is then transported to buyers who are assured a supply of quality raw drugs (FRLHT 2002). There is now consensus that cultivation offers the best prospect for conserving wild medicinal plant species (Pandey 2008). In addition to maintaining or expanding supply, cultivation is seen as a short-term solution because while it achieves goals for conservation it also provides industry with a steady supply of medicinal plants. A long-term solution to conserve species-diversity could include the use of gene banks and botanical gardens.

In a move away from the ‘demonstration projects’ of the 1990s and towards integrated national conservation, Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funding in India was instrumental in developing a network of 300 *in situ* forest reserves of medicinal plants across different biodiversity zones, linked to decentralised nurseries and a state level seed centre (FRLHT 2002). To demonstrate firm commitment towards integrated national policy and practice, the Government of India established an independent agency known as the “National Medicinal Plants Board” (NMPB) to oversee, coordinate and manage all aspects of medicinal plant biodiversity and use. The NMPB's mandate is to address three key areas with respect to medicinal plants: conservation interests of environmentalists, multi-national interest in forest products, and international and national community-development interests in poverty alleviation. To this end a significant amount of attention was placed on the possibility of market-oriented conservation and development. By examining relationships between various actors in the development chain (village people, local authorities, government agencies and donors) and the commodity chain (collectors, traders and middlemen) my intention is to show how desired representations of the integration of conservation, trade, and community development interests are created and reproduced. I explore the shaping and reshaping of priorities, needs and values around the trade and use of medicinal plants.

1.2 Theoretical Considerations

Although my primary objective is to understand how conservation and development interventions for medicinal plant trade are shaped from an anthropological perspective, I rely on research from a number of disciplines, in particular sociology, political science, geography and economics. My analysis falls onto three axes of investigation; the first axis is regional research on state-society relations in the Himalayan region. The available regional studies were instrumental in understanding the politics of forest management unique to this state in both the colonial and post-colonial era. Historical priorities for forestry shaped the current state of forestry to varying degrees. Colonial officers have passed down many forest-management practices and policies currently in place. Apart from providing the regional background for my study the analysis provided me with insight into state-society relations and how they have transformed over time. The second axis for this study is political ecology. Recent work in political ecology has moved away from the focus on state-society conflict to micro-politics, which looks at both conflicts and coalitions. Shifting the gaze from state-society to micro-politics makes room for understanding the number of divisions that exist within all encompassing categories such as state. I apply political ecology's methodological approach to examine discontent within the state, and the inherently contradictory position of those whose existence is located on the state-society boundary. Finally, the third axis of this study is anthropological encounters with the practice and politics of conservation and environmental management. As most expertise is impermanent, room to negotiate the space between policy and practice is increased. In such circumstances, a variety of expertise – both scientific and public—is necessary when making decisions related to policy implementation. For this dissertation I explore the space between policy and practice to understand how representations of successful policy implementation are produced and maintained. I look at integrated conservation and development initiatives connected to the creation of the GHNP, and actions of associated NGOs, to bring forward development narratives that are firmly in place, and which link assumptions about environmental concerns to policy action (Roe 1991).

1.2.1 Regional Context

Studies on the Indian Himalayas have provided valuable insights into state-society

relations, socio-ecological movements, and the general history of this region. They have also made a substantial contribution to broad theoretical understanding of the politics of natural resource management. Protests against commercial exploitation of forests, in particular the Chipko movement, and conflicts over rights in protected areas, resulted in a number of studies that provided rich analysis of state and society interests in forest resources (see for example Bandopadhyay & Shiva 1986; Shiva 1988, Guha 1989, Khator 1989, Weber 1991, Viklap 1994, Vania 1997, Gooch 1997). These studies reveal the diverse interests that motivate a variety of actors, and bring forward conflicting interests of the state and rural society. Bandopadhyay and Shiva's (1986) study on peasant-state relations with respect to Himalayan forests, illustrates the dichotomy that exists between the state's urban industrial interests and peasant's subsistence interests. Other studies have critiqued the romanticized notion of sustainable, static (Guha 1989) and homogenous (Agrawal 1997) peasant communities in the Himalayas.

Conflict between the Forest Department and society continues to be the centrepiece of regional research. A colonial British forest officer makes note of this in one of his records, 'the Forest Department has been created for a running fight with the villagers' (MacNair 1907). This perception continues even today, despite the Department's many efforts to create a people-friendly image. Political and economic interests often underlie these antagonistic relations; Gadgil and Guha (1993) argue that the state's primary interest in forests is either commercial or conservationist and that the use of forests for either of these purposes is at odds with the priorities and needs of rural people. The idea that state interests are in direct conflict with basic needs of the population has been supported by a number of studies from around the world (Blaikie & Brookfield 1987, Hecht & Cockburn 1990, Peluso 1992). The conflict of interest between the state and rural community over rights to scarce natural resources continues to this day. However, at the local level this relationship between state and society is complex. Instead of daily hostility, there are a number of negotiations take place between the Forest Department and members of society, with the Forest Department and with societies. In this dissertation I focus on negotiations that ultimately affect the implementation of policies and programs.

Forests in the Himalayas have been managed by the state for over a century and several authors have emphasized the significance of this ecological history for

contemporary forest management (see for example Guha 1983, Gadgil and Guha 1985, Bhattacharya 1986, Guha 1990, Haeuber 1993, Rangarajan 1994). These authors focus on debates and concerns that shaped colonial forest policy, conflicts and negotiations that surrounded these policies, and the resulting impacts on the ecology. While discussing the making of the 1878 Forest Act, Guha (1989) points out noticeable similarities between the debates of that time and a more recent controversy over a Forest Act drafted by the government of India in 1982. Gadgil and Guha (1993) discuss the continuation of state monopoly over forests, its industrial underpinnings, and on-going peasant struggles against the state's monopoly. Haeuber (1993) goes further to say that Indian forest policy has remained constant over nearly two hundred years, and that the philosophy, goals, and policies of the Forest Department have remained largely the same.

My focus on conservation of medicinal plants adds two crucial dimensions to regional studies. First, I show that the relationship between the Forest Department and village people is mediated in different ways at different times. Second, I examine how contemporary forest management flows from colonial forest management.

1.2.2 Political Ecology

Political ecology addresses the political, economic, and cultural factors underlying human use of natural resources. Studies that rely on the lens provided by political ecology for analysis have brought forward the linkages between ecology, local social relations, and larger politico-economic processes. The strength of this approach has been that it draws from varied theoretical streams with a common thread—a bottom-up approach (Blaikie 1985) that grounds ecology in a web of social relations (Watts 1985). Neumann (1992) explains that at the most fundamental level, a political ecology perspective involves a focus on resources users and their social networks, tracing linkages between local relations and the wider geographical and social setting, and using historical data to understand contemporary contexts. To understand the trade, collection and conservation of medicinal plants in Tirthan valley I apply political ecology's approach to analysis. I begin with an analysis of colonial conditions for forestry then move on to discuss contemporary agendas that now shape forest management. I focus on the social and political networks that

influence livelihood strategies and everyday practices of villagers.

Moore's (1987) description of resource-oriented ethnography also provides valuable guidance. His approach identifies institutions as the site of 'diagnostic events' that reveal the 'ongoing contests and conflicts and competitions and the efforts to prevent, suppress, or repress them' (1987:730). Focusing on the institution of Law, Moore (1986) explores the dynamic influences in the lives of the Chagga in East Tanzania. I focus on resources, relationships, and 'representations' as used in Moore's work, to analyse development and conservation agendas in my field site. By focusing on the interwoven nature of these agendas, transformations that take place over time are revealed (Moore 1986).

The state and its conflicts with local communities is a predominant theme in many studies utilizing the political ecology framework. However, as Neumann (1992:87) points out:

Characteristically in this literature the analysis does not delve deeply into the day-to-day workings of local politics, but remains focused on formal political structures, often at the inter-class level.

Exceptions to this include studies that have focused on local level peasant resistance to state forest policies (Neumann 1992; Guha 1989; Peluso 1992). In these studies the focus is on how local communities use overt and covert forms to protest state policies that seek to restrict or criminalize their access to resources. In this vein, Peluso (1993) emphasizes that most developing country government officials lack the capacity to enforce unpopular policies that restrict access and use, particularly when coercive measures are used as enforcement.

Blaikie (1985:72) was one of the first to suggest that ineffective bureaucracy was a result of inter-departmental bickering. In other regions, Moore (1993) and Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) have argued that conflicting mandates for two or more departments within the state may prevent effective policy implementation. Pathak's (1994) work on environmental policy in India also broadly argues that both the state and peasant society are stratified. He claims that:

The relationship between the state and peasants is not a macro-micro duality but a spectrum of linkages running down from the state and industrial-urban complex to the forest dwelling communities. The state finds its extensions in the elites of stratified peasant society. This elite

strata is characterized by a Janus-faced contradictory character: it is an outpost of the state and a part of the village community (Pathak 1994:14).

It is important to note that earlier social science research also debated the creation of state policy and actions (see for example Miliband 1973). Jessop (1990) describes the state as an uneven landscape for social forces, and Therborn's (1980) work shows that different social interests come together in different sub-systems of the state leading to conflicts within the state itself. I follow the trajectory of these studies, and argue that both the state and society are a heterogeneous entity, frequently negotiating boundaries with respect to resources and access.

1.2.3 Conservation Narratives

According to Porritt and Winner (1988), green thinking aims 'to create a new economic and social order which will allow human beings to live in harmony with the planet' (cited in Dobson 1990:9); and moral and ethical positions are established by the use of images that portray ecological balance. Similarly, in explaining the concept of sustainable development and the rationale for intervention, Redclift draws on systems ecology to justify his position: 'The homeostatic controls that exist within natural communities, and that enable them to achieve succession are only effective if these ecosystems are protected from rapid change' (1987:18). These arguments have been critiqued by a number of scholars (for example Jackson 1993; Leach & Green 1997, Adams & Thomas 1995); nevertheless these perspectives have global reach (Yearley 1994, Jamison 1996).

Sustainable development movements that are focused on the balance between nature and society frequently build on debates popular in the western world and become instrumental in structuring policies and identifying solutions (Taylor & Buttel 1992, Schroeder & Neumann 1995, Leach & Mearns 1996). Development 'narratives' (Roe 1991) that give way to a range of representations centred on ecological balance become a key element in policies and actions for intervention. The way the natural world is counted, classified, labelled and interpreted comes from methods used in ecological sciences, which then become embedded in management and administration systems of state agencies, NGOs and development projects (Rangan 1995, Rocheleau & Ross 1995, Robbins 1998, Scott 1998). One's understanding of a forest, overgrazing, soil-loss, endangered species and wilderness

is derived from a specific view of ecology, which also lends itself to the construction of types of people – forest-dwellers, pastoralists, small-scale farmers, or indigenous peoples – who are often positioned as the reason for environmental decline (Neumann 1995, Brosius 1999). Interventions that result from analyses framed in this way can have negative consequences for local populations. For example, studies of environment-friendly (agro) forestry interventions in the Gambia (Schroeder 1995, 1997), the Republic of Guinea (Fairhead & Leach 1996), and the Dominican Republic (Rocheleau & Ross 1995) show the ‘deeply ambiguous results of local environmental intervention plotted at a global level’ (Schroeder & Neumann 1995:324).

Moore’s (1998) study of the environmental politics and history surrounding the Kaerzi River Protected Area in Zimbabwe’s eastern Highlands provides an example of the direction future work on conservation and development could take. He argues the need for ‘viewing the landscape as the historical sedimentation of symbolic and material processes,’ emphasising ‘competing cultural constructions that assert resource rights and environmental entitlements’ (1998:379). He demonstrates the ways in which landscapes are created, how they are intensely social, and how the push for conservation changes the social disposition of people’s surroundings. He also questions notions of state, community, peasants, and conservationists to bring attention to complexities associated with the social production of space.

Brockington (2002: 18,25,28) shows ‘productions’ are utilized to determine whose claims to a particular ethnic group are valid, and argues that social reality is simplified so it can fit into the desired production of conservation. These ‘productions’ ease the process of policy-making and management (Brockington 2002:25) by placing people’s socio-ecological practices within the categories attributed to protected landscapes by institutions such as International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (Harmon 2003). In this way, conservation, similar to colonialism, solidifies certain identities and ethnicities (Hodgson 2001, Li 2000) and solidifies them in a particular space and place (Appadurai 1988).

These productions also affect the kinds of evaluation systems that are either in place or taken seriously. Kaus (1993) shows that the Mapini Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, with its divisions into eight different zones, is a new production of space

that differs radically from local people's divisions of land. She also shows that local people and researchers have vastly different ideas about what the land in the reserve contains, its importance, and systems for evaluation of the value of plants, animals, and natural processes. This dissertation explores the process of simplifying relationships, institutions, and identities into a few easily understood and characterized issues or topics (Igoe 2004).

1.3 Research Site

Himachal Pradesh is a northern Indian state, with Jammu and Kashmir to the north, Punjab to the west, Haryana and Uttarakhand on the southeast border. The state's economy consists primarily of hydroelectric power, tourism and agriculture. The large number of perennial rivers allows Himachal Pradesh to sell hydroelectricity to neighbouring states. Nearly 90% of the population resides in rural areas, however 25% of the population lives in Shimla district, which is highly urbanized. The 2005 Transparency International survey found that Himachal Pradesh is the second least corrupt state in India, after Kerala. Like many regions of India, rural communities in Himachal Pradesh continue to rely on natural resources. As explained in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation state control over forest resources has evolved over time. Forested lands are utilized for a wide range of products necessary to meet household subsistence needs and fulfill markets demands. Market integration has not been evenly spread out throughout the state. Some areas of Himachal Pradesh are remote and isolated, and thus local populations have been relatively sheltered from external markets, however less remote areas have been able to gradually transition to a cash-crop economy. In the last three decades state intervention and non-farm employment in rural areas has resulted in population growth and increased access to education. In the last hundred years the state has also experienced social mobilization connected directly to use and access of natural resources. The twelve districts that now make up Himachal Pradesh (Kullu, Kangra, Chamba, Mandi, Una, Kinnaur, Solan, Shimla, Sirmour, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Lahaul and Spiti) have a varied colonial legacy as approximately half of what is now Himachal Pradesh was under British rule, while the remaining area was under the rule of princely states. There is less evidence of social mobilization in princely states, while in the 1930's the British ruled areas were experiencing tenant mobilization resulting from tensions related to

use and access of forested lands (Singh 1998). The impact of changes in colonial political economy, such as the shift in early twentieth century from timber to irrigation revenues, affected Himachal Pradesh territories differentially due to the variation in ecological regimes (Tucker 1983). Policy responses to social mobilization also differed considerably in the post-colonial period.

The evolution of rights to forests in Himachal Pradesh varies significantly from other regions in India. Forest settlements crafted by colonial forest officers recorded many local forest rights. Village landowners have extensive user rights to graze cattle, collect fuel-wood, and collect most non-timber products for their personal use. Many village people also have the right to occasionally harvest timber when required for house construction and repair. In addition to this village people could sell NTFP and thus gain financially from state forests. Even though forested lands belong to the state, village people benefited from relatively liberal user rights near their villages. Anderson's (1886) forest settlement of Kullu is a typical example of how forest rights were understood at the time. After much debate, the bulk of Kullu forests were classified under Chapter IV (protected forests) of the Indian Forest Act (1878), this provided significant space for local people in terms of use and access to forested lands (see Chapter 2 for further discussion on Anderson's forest settlements).

All rights were registered in the 1886 Anderson forest settlement, and forest settlements in Himachal Pradesh could therefore be termed progressive in that they recognized and legalized local forest uses. These settlements are significant today for community forestry activities because they provide a context for negotiations between local communities and the Forest Department. Himachal Pradesh has a wide variety of long-standing local initiatives for management of natural resources. There are community-level institutions that have been set up through state initiatives as well as traditional community institutions. Both kinds straddle the two most important resources in the state – forests and irrigation. Recently, the state has been foraging ahead and increasing avenues by which local populations can participate in forestry. This is being encouraged through decentralization policies, particularly notable are forestry policies that devolve regulatory authority to village-level institutions, and development policies that provide greater autonomy to elected councils at the village and *panchayats* level.

Primary data for this research was collected from August 2004 until December

2005 in Tirthan valley. Tirthan valley is located in Kullu district, which is in central Himachal Pradesh (see Appendix A and B). Kullu District is located on the south slope of the Himalaya and considered to be a high mountain area, elevations range from 1000m to well over 6000m above sea level. Kullu's forested lands are comprised of mountain coniferous forests; lower elevations are dominated by deodar and fir species. At higher elevations forested areas are primarily temperate mixed deciduous and coniferous forest of birch and some oak, and a forest-tundra ecotone of mixed trees and tundra or meadow vegetation.

The Kullu valley forms the upper reaches of the Beas River, the valley consists of the floodplains of the Beas River and paraglacial fans and terraces (Owen *et al.* 1995) giving rise to rich 'agricultural plateaux' as described by Harcourt (1870). Since the mid nineteenth century, and increasingly so after 1947 (Independence), forest resources, products and services in addition to agriculture have been an essential aspect of rural livelihoods (Sinclair and Ham 2000).

According to the 2011 census Kullu district has a population of 437,474, with a density averaging 79 people/km (GOI 2011). It has the highest annual population growth rate in the state since 1981 (2.6 per cent), mainly due to in-migration of labour (GOI 2011). Kulluvi (one variation of the *Pahari* dialect of Hindi language) is spoken in this region and younger generations are fluent in Hindi. Kullu economy has undergone considerable changes in the last three decades, which is attributed primarily to commercial apple production and tourism. The main occupation of a majority of the respondents in this study was agriculture. Wheat, maize, and barley are the principal crops, although inter-cropping with pulses and beans is common. In recent years cash crops such as garlic and off-season vegetables are increasingly planted and cultivated. Kullu District is considered to be a rural area and Kullu town is an important centre for local commerce and tourism². A national highway connects this district directly to Chandigarh and Delhi. With the construction of this highway there has been an increase in trade and transport. The highway has also facilitated the movement of people into, and out of the area, resulting in demographic changes – migrant communities are a visibly present in the region.

The GHNP was established in 1984 and is located in Kullu District (Pandey

² Kullu is the name of a central district in Himachal Pradesh, and also the name of the second tourist town in the district (i.e. Kullu District, and Kullu town).

and Wells 1997). Starting from an altitude of 1,700 meters above mean sea level, the highest peak within the Park approaches almost 5,800 meters. The GHNP is 754.4 km² in area and is naturally protected on the northern, eastern and southern boundaries by either snow or steep ridges (Pandey 2008). The area of land considered ideal for a national park was also important to local populations for a number of resources they required to meet their livelihood needs. Approximately 11,000 people live in a five-kilometer wide periphery, on the western side of the GHNP border. A large majority of households cultivate small parcels of land for subsistence need for a portion of the year, a household can not survive on cultivation alone, and thus households also rely on a variety of additional resource to meet their annual requirements, including commercial grazing of sheep and goats, extraction of medicinal herbs to be sold to a burgeoning pharmaceutical and cosmetics industry, and collection of morel mushrooms local referred to as *gucchi*.

There is a temporal and spatial seasonality in the way that households in the area use forest resources. In April herders begin to move their sheep and goats gradually up the high altitude meadows, here they stay for approximately three months, before the animals make their way down to where villages are located. The collection of medicinal plants and morel mushrooms is also seasonal. The mushrooms grow lower altitudes in and around forested lands in close proximity to villages. The mushrooms are collected during April or early May, depending on when the snow begins to melt. All members of a household collect mushroom because they are easily accessible (unlike most medicinal plants). The mushroom is dried in the village and eventually sold to local traders from small towns in the valley or to traders from Kullu (Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion on mushroom collection in Tirthan valley). Medicinal plants are collected from high altitude areas, most often in and around the GHNP. This is grueling work that was previously undertaken out by local men. In the recent years, as local men move onto farm based and non farm based economies, Nepali men have become increasingly involved with medicinal plant collection. Medicinal plant collectors spend approximately two to three weeks at high altitudes collecting plants before descending to the villages in which they reside. Forest Department officials and scientist have long believed that biological diversity is seriously threatened by grazing and collection activities (DeCoursey 1997; Sharma 1997; Vinod and Satyakumar 1999; Singh and Rawat 1999; Ramesh, Sathyakumar and Rawat 2000).

I provide a complete discussion on medicinal plant collection and the changing face of the collector in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Tirthan valley forms the ecodevelopment zone of the GHNP (see Appendix C), which has an area of 326.6 km² (including 61 km² of Tirthan wildlife sanctuary) with about 120 small villages or hamlets comprising approximately 2,000 households, a populations of approximately 14,000 4 (Pandey 2008). Banjar, once a village in Tirthan valley, has in the last 20 years become the administrative centre of the valley. The town now has a police station, hospital, veterinary services, two public schools, and variety of small shops. The Forest Department and the Superintendent District Magistrate (SDM) have offices in Banjar. From Banjar one can take a bus to and from Tirthan valley. Villages in the valley are located along the Tirthan River and on mountain ridges, villages located between the river and road have electricity, however unreliable and infrequent, and some of these homes also have a telephone line. Water is either collected from village wells that have been installed by the public works or from nearby springs. Most village people prefer to collect drinking water from springs as they feel it is cleaner and contains minerals with health benefits.

I chose Tirthan valley because a majority of the medicinal plants collected in Kullu District came from this area, and also because the GHNP was located on the eastern edge of the valley. This made for an interesting study. Issues pertaining to medicinal plants extended beyond the context of trade and economics; there was a very obvious conservation aspect that came to prominence with the creation of the GHNP. I was interested in how different and conflicting priorities around the trade and conservation of medicinal plants converged and were ultimately brokered. With many overlapping interests I was keen to explore how conservation and development concerns around medicinal plants are played out, and to explore the disjuncture between policies and practice in this regard.

1.4 Methodology

In the first year of my doctoral studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies I began to work towards identifying a potential research site. I decided to look at Northern India for a potential field site because I spoke Hindi, this would most certainly be an advantage in understanding how people live and make every day

decisions. My initial assessment based on literature and document review was that there was a significant amount of medicinal plant collection in Northern Indian states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. When I arrived in Delhi I continued secondary data review and began meeting with individuals at various agencies to identify a specific field site for study. I met with staff at World Bank, Winrock, World Wildlife Fund India, IDRC, Institute for Economic Growth, in addition to independent academics that had carried out research related to forestry in northern India. This led me to development taking place in Himachal Pradesh, specifically Department for International Development's (DiFD) UK Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Reform Project and the GHNP. Himachal Pradesh, due to variation in its history, ecology and politics, provides a rich analysis and comparison of local populations responses to changes in social, economic, political and environmental contexts. The analytical framework for this research draws on a diverse body of research as explained in Section 1.2 of this chapter, and the findings contribute to the literature on decentralization, conservation and forest management, and livelihoods. The research design incorporates insights from several research perspectives and methodologies, combining archival research and ethnography.

Data from archival sources were used to contrast the overall historical context within which particular processes have unfolded in Himachal Pradesh over the last century and half. Colonial political economy and its shifting focus from an emphasis on timber revenues to returns from public investment in irrigation at the turn of the 19th century influenced the distribution of property rights in land and forest resources in the state. Archival data improved my understanding of the social, economic, political and ecological history of Kullu. Documents collected at the National Archives of India in New Delhi and the Himachal Pradesh State Archives in Shimla contained historical information and records on a wide range of topics. The Forest Department's archives housed information necessary to understand colonial conservation and forest management in this region. Forest settlements for Himachal Pradesh were available at the Secretariat Library and the Forest Department Library in Shimla. Forest annual reports for the last thirty years and forest statistics periodically published by the Forest Department were available in the record section of the Forest Department in Shimla. I relied on these documents to understand change in demand for forest products and change in forest composition over time.

Most recent modifications in forest management, recorded opinions of forest officers on policy, and current data on number and species of trees harvested and planted, were obtained from Forest Department office files and records in Shimla and from the Forest Circle office in Kullu. The historical landscape of forest management presented in Chapter 2 provides a background against which the analysis in later chapter can be used to draw lessons from the findings.

In terms of ethnography, I was initially keen to adopt Marcus's (1995) multi-sited approach to understanding the field site, moving from villages where medicinal plants were collected and following the trade to Delhi and from there London, England. In my first year of study I began working at an Ayurvedic clinic in London to learn how herbal products were marketed and perceived in the West. However, after a few months in the clinic I realised that in order to develop a robust understanding of this aspect of the supply chain I needed to interview and observe customers in numerous shops and clinics, and meet with companies producing these products. I took a step back to think about what motivated this study, and what I wanted to learn. In doing this I came back to my interest in international development, environmental management and governance, and decided that a village-level study, where medicinal plant collection and trade began, was the best approach. My entry into Tirthan valley was through the NGO SAHARA, GHNP staff, WSCG members, and local collectors. Once village people became familiar with me and my reasons for residing in the valley I broadened my focus to traders from outside and inside (local shopkeepers) the valley and to those most vulnerable to market pressures – poor village people (that were often the lower caste) and the invisible (migrant labourers).

After arriving to my field site I intended to choose one or two villages in which to live and work. However, after a few weeks of attempting to identify "the village" I came to the conclusion that a one-village approach would not allow me to understand the social networks that exist around medicinal plant trade in any depth, and nuances that shape every day village life. Restricting my work to a village would have made it difficult to observe how people's interactions with various individuals who come in and out of Tirthan valley were incorporated into village life. In my field-site villages and hamlets were quite small, approximately 15- 20 households, I came to the decision that Tirthan valley would be my field of inquiry.

I then began to see that the valley itself was multi-sited in nature.³ Tirthan valley has a long history of traders flowing in and out of the region and today traders from Bhunter (in Kullu District), Amritsar, Delhi and abroad come to the valley in addition to World Bank officers, embassy officials, and migrants in search of daily wage labour, from Bihar, Rajasthan and Nepal. People from Tirthan valley also travel to urban centres in search of education, trade, and employment. The national highway that connects Kullu to Delhi and Chandigarh facilitates access and movement of goods, opportunities and services.

Participatory and non-participatory observation and extensive open-ended interviews provided me with a significant amount of primary data. I began fieldwork by establishing residence in a village in Tirthan valley. SAHARA Group Organizers (GOs) introduced me to village people informally before I began household interviews. I visited Tirthan valley villages several times before beginning formal data collection. By the time I began interviews most village people were aware of my residence in the valley and also had some idea as to why I was residing in the valley.

Initial interviews were carried out with GO's and representatives from 40 of the approximately 80 WSCG's established in Tirthan valley. These interviews provided an overview of some of the forest management, conservation and trade issues in the area and assisted in selecting villages where research efforts would be focused. Villages were selected based on their location – those that were located both in Tirthan valley and fell within the boundaries of the GHNP ecodevelopment zone. The objective was to capture perspectives of people impacted by changes resulting from GHNP and increased interest in NTFP. A list of all villages and households in the research study site was developed with the assistance of WSCG representatives, Forest Guards, a local NGO SAHARA's GO's and coordinator. From this list of approximately 2200 households we randomly selected 15% of the households in each village to participate in the questionnaire exercise (a copy of the questionnaire is available in Appendix F)⁴. The purpose of the questionnaire was not to obtain data for statistical analysis. These questionnaires were administered with the goal of obtaining a general understanding of the socio-economic conditions, and

³ At SOAS Dr. Christopher Davis had indeed suggested that the field-site might actually be multi-sided people moving in and out.

⁴ This is the sample size has a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 5.

insight into gender relations, distribution of labour, income and employment, education, social networks, interests and values. To ensure that questions were easily understood questionnaires were field-tested before I began fieldwork. The questionnaire proved to be a useful tool for both data collection and initial introduction and entry into households. At the start of my fieldwork village people were uncomfortable with open-ended discussions and preferred to answer a “regular survey” with which they had some familiarity. However, much of the qualitative data collected that was crucial in the dissertation was collected in open-ended interviews in the latter half of my fieldwork through informal conversations. The questionnaire collected basic household data on occupation, income, and education. Questions were asked in Hindi and notes were taken of discussions that resulted from a question asked in the questionnaire. These notes provided me with the opportunity to identify key people for further in-depth interviews.

At the beginning of each interview and questionnaire I told participants a little about me. I clarified that I was doing research for my studies and that I was broadly interested in understanding how village people used forests, their feelings about the GHNP, and their relationship with the Forest Department. In response I was often asked if I was writing a report for the Forest Department. I made a conscientious effort to deny this common assumption and provide further explanation if required.

A majority of the interviews and questionnaires were conducted with a single member of the household although in most cases household members and neighbours took a seat next to the respondent and “helped” with the answers. Initially these types of responses worried me because I felt that I was unable to obtain an accurate assessment of the interviewee’s perceptions or ideas. However, after the first few interviews I came to realize this format of interviewing did have an advantage; the respondent’s estimates on most answers were open to debate, which then provided a better depiction of a shared reality. For instance, issues such as income, wealth, and timber used were generally open knowledge in the village, and the presence of others encouraged the respondents to provide close estimates.

Questions on the medicinal plant trade were intentionally open-ended, resulting in a significant amount of qualitative data on this topic. In addition to interviewing residents of Tirthan valley, I also interviewed people who visited the valley. This included a wide variety of government officials, traders, donor agency officials and staff, and relatives from neighbouring villages. In the case of Forest

Department personnel, revenue officials, and traders, I continued discussions that were initiated in a village at their offices. I also accompanied villagers who were visiting government offices, in particular the Forest Department and the GHNP office.

In terms of research ethics, once questionnaire and interview participants were selected they were asked if they would be interested in participating a questionnaire or an interview approximately 2 to 3 weeks before the actual interview or questionnaire was to take place. We decided to provide a few weeks between the request for participation in interviews and/or questionnaires and the actual event in order to give people the opportunity to consult with anyone they felt necessary to decide whether they would in fact participate. When we made the request for their time we answered any questions they had about the research and the purpose of the data collection exercise. They were free to decline participating at anytime. For those that did agree to participate we guaranteed anonymity – to this end names were changed in the interview and questionnaire and subsequently in this dissertation. Some residents, both temporary and permanent, and traders were involved in activities considered illegal – for example the sale of *charus* and banned medicinal plant species, again all respondents names were changed whether they were participating in a formal interview or questionnaire or in an informal conversation or exchange. With qualitative research my intent was to explore, examine and describe people and their natural environments. Embedded in qualitative research are the concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants. The desire to participate in a research study depends upon participant's willingness to share their experiences. Participants were autonomous people who were sharing information willingly. Kvale (1996) considered an interview to be a moral endeavor, claiming that the participant's response is affected by the interview, and that the knowledge gained through the interview affects our understanding of the human experience. The personal interaction between researchers and participants is crucial in data gathering. In collecting data and writing this dissertation I am aware that my perceptions of field situations are determined by personality and the nature of the interactions (Punch, 1994).

1.5 Plan of the Dissertation

Focusing on attempts to improve landscapes and livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh I

examine the practices that allow experts to diagnose a problem and determine interventions, and the agency of people who have been targeted for reform. This dissertation attempts to show that interventions draw upon a combination of practical knowledge, vocabularies, differing types of authority and judgement, perceptions, and human capacity. Most often intervention programs are shaped from existing practices and experiences. Individuals of course are involved in devising particular interventions and programs for development. Institutions to which these individuals are members have a hand in shaping their position, and their position becomes routine through everyday practice. What are these practices? I propose that two types of practices are necessary to translate interventions into explicit programs. One is identifying problems that need to be corrected and the second is a set of practices focused on representing the area to be managed as an “intelligent field” (Ferguson 1994) with set limits and specific characteristics, one that requires boundaries to be demarcated. It is also the focus on capacities of groups instead of the practices through which one group marginalises another, this particular aspect of planned development “insistently reposes political questions of land, resources, jobs, or wages as technical ‘problems’ response to the technical ‘development’ intervention” (Ferguson 1994:270). The two practices are connected; identifying a problem is linked to the availability of a solution. As Ferguson (1994) explained in *Anti-politics Machine*, the characterization of an “intelligible field” right for intervention anticipates the types of interventions that experts can provide.

An expert frames issues in technical terms allowing them to determine a solution that falls within their range of skills, knowledge and experience. In this way they are able to maintain their ‘expert’ title. However this process of exclusion or reorienting the issue in technical terms is in itself an intervention that has significant impacts. As illustrated in the chapters following, excluding what does not fall within the expert’s domain development and policy interventions limits and shapes what development becomes.

In this first chapter my intention is to introduce conservation and development interests in medicinal plants and underscore the theoretical studies that provide the backbone for my analysis. To provide context for this study I describe my field site and the methods I used to collect data. To understand the relationship between conservation and development, the institutions that sustain it, and trade in forest products, I divide this dissertation into five central chapters: a colonial review of

forestry, a discussion of contemporary conditions for forest management, an analysis of rural livelihoods, the medicinal plant trade and the commodity chain, and finally an analysis of how a conservation and development project is brokered to produce success.

I begin by touching on colonial forestry in Himachal Pradesh in Chapter 2. I trace colonial encounters in forestry, with a specific emphasis on how the Forest Department defined its priorities and objectives for forestry and how this shaped colonial conservation discourse. Using this as a foundation, in subsequent chapters I develop my ethnography of village people's contemporary interactions with forest conservation and development agendas.

In Chapter 3 I discuss contemporary conditions for forest management in Kullu District, specifically interests in decentralization. I illustrate how policy objectives for decentralized forest management are played out. In doing so I argue that the demand to show tangible results, in combination with the bureaucracy's desire to maintain control, has in many instances undermined goals for decentralization.

In Chapter 4 my attention turns to rural transformation in Tirthan valley. To understand what a village is in contemporary society I explore locality, history, and socio-economic processes that village people engage with every day. I do this to describe village people's relationship with shifting social and geographic landscapes and their continued incorporation into a market economy. In light of the transformations taking place I question if the Forest Department's claim that "rural communities are heavily dependent of forests" continues to hold true.

While Chapter 4 discusses socio-economic processes at work in Tirthan valley, and sheds light on the increasing diversification of a rural economy, Chapter 5 focuses specifically on the medicinal plant trade. I examine how medicinal plants fit into rural livelihoods. As local people leave their villages in search of opportunities available in urban centres, it is the migrant communities residing in Tirthan valley who sustain the medicinal plant trade. In Tirthan valley Nepali immigrants supply traders with medicinal plants so that market demands can be met.

Once I explain collection and trade of medicinal plants, I examine conservation and development initiatives centred on medicinal plants. SAHARA, a local NGO, has been working diligently to create Medicinal Plant Propagation Areas (MPPA) with the WSCGs. The intention is to have WSCG members cultivate and harvest high value medicinal plants to sell directly to traders in Delhi, thus eliminating local middlemen.

It is believed that this will not only curb illegal medicinal plant collection, but also create new economic opportunities for women. However, this intervention is fraught with challenges. Here my ethnography examines attempts to reorient the medicinal plant commodity chain in an effort to conserve valuable plant species while creating economic opportunities for local people – particularly village women.

Finally in Chapter 6 I explore the how a successful project is created. Conservation and development projects were supposedly successfully addressing village people's need for forest resources, while also achieving goals for conservation. I unpack this claim by borrowing the argument Lewis and Mosse's (2006) present in *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies* - that project success is maintained by a series of brokers. I also show that representations of project success are created and sustained through project activities and initiatives like WSCGs, MPPAs, films, brochures and village visits.⁵

⁵ I borrow this argument from Mosse's *Cultivating Development* (2005).

CHAPTER 2 SHAPING PRIORITIES: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

The rationale for forest conservancy during the colonial regime continues to preoccupy a number of Historians examining Indian forest policy. This debate began with Guha in 1983 with his article *Forestry in British and post British India*. Here Guha examined a series of local regulations that resulted in the India Government Forest Act of 1865 and 1878, with which the government asserted its right over large areas of forested lands. He concludes that the 1878 Forest Act was generally annexist and denied most local rights. In 1989 Guha moved further with his findings to provided substantial debate on colonial forestry in India with this book *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, in which he argues that the Forest Department's interest in reducing local use of forested areas, was linked to their priorities for timber extraction. Guha (1989) proposes that the Forest Department's actions related to conservancy were directly related to their perception that livestock grazing and human requirements for fodder and firewood were negatively impacting forest lands, and resulting in a decline of timber production. Richard Grove's (1995) work provides an analysis of colonial interests with respect to use and access of natural resources; he argues that forest policy in India is inherently connected to colonial forest officials' concerns for the environment.

In addition to the above-mentioned analysis provided by Guha (1989) and Grove (1995), Arnold and Guha (1995) and Gadgil and Guha (1993) were also instrumental in framing Indian environmental history and carving out a space for dialogue and study in this area. Nevertheless their research did have a tendency to accept dichotomies that could obscure nuances and subtleties that exist within and between groups with an interest in forestry (Agrawal 2005). Rajan (1994) proposes that foresters' concerns were not solely focused on state economics, instead these foresters brought with them their own environmental concerns and experiences in conservation and management. Rajan's proposal runs counter to Gadgil and Guha's (1993) understanding of colonial priorities for forestry and Grove's (1995) proposal that forest policy was essentially a colonial objective, and that European foresters simply transferred their ideas and practices to an Indian landscape. While Rajan's (1994) analysis of colonial forestry offers a different perspective to those provided prior to his work, it does not take into account the number of other forces that had a

hand in shaping forest management historically. Sivaramakrishnan's work (1997, 1999) presents another position from which to examine environmental policy. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing local context and experiences of foresters in the field, and suggests that these experiences were crucial in developing forest management and conservation policies in West Bengal. He goes on to emphasize the role institutional context has in shaping foresters' observations, their perceptions and in turn the analysis that they presented in their writings. Sivaramakrishnan (1999) positions his understanding of forest policy within the specific local context and bureaucracy in which forest policy was being developed. Sivaramakrishnan (1999) proposes that the process of policy development was a result of a combination of field experience, relationships between local community and colonial government, and pressures from a variety of institutions. In this chapter I move forward with Sivaramakrishnan's (1999) claim that policy should be understood in its institutional context, and I go on to suggest that in Himachal Pradesh forestry was focused on meeting specific objectives and not a dynamic process. My suggestion that forestry was focused on specific objectives contradicts Sivaramakrishnan's (1999) proposal in "*Colonialism and Forestry in India: Imagining the past in present politics*", that dynamic processes shape and reshape forest policy development. Sivaramakrishnan (1999) points out that forest policy is a reflection of interests and tensions originating from within the bureaucracy, and from within local communities that must comply with policies the Forest Department was intending to implement. In this chapter I explain that this rationale is not entirely applicable to forest policy development in Himachal Pradesh. The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department developed specific policies in response to a specific bureaucracy.⁶ The progression of forest management in the Himalayas was not dynamic but instead it was influenced by conflicting priorities between two government departments – the Forest Department and the Revenue Department. The ebb and flow of relations between local communities and government was initially not a factor in policy development. A predominantly economic rationale for forest management in Himachal Pradesh eventually made way for environmental conservation. This shift in priorities, from economic to environmental conservation, was a reaction to the Revenue

⁶ The state of Himachal Pradesh was initially constituted following its separation from the Punjab at the time of Indian independence and acquired its current geographic boundaries in 1966. At this time Kullu was not its own district it fell within the boundaries of Kangra District.

Department's belief that Forest Department's policies restricted local population's use and access to forest resources. Chhatre's (2003) work records the tensions between the two Departments, as does Baker (2007) in his analysis of opposing intra-governmental priorities in Himachal Pradesh.

By the 1940s, foresters were suggesting that continued human use of mountain forests for grazing and firewood collection could lead to degradation of large areas and make it impossible for human populations in the region to eke out an existence. This talk of degradation continues to dominate conversations between Forest Department officials in Himachal Pradesh. While I was in Himachal Pradesh I found widespread acceptance of the degradation discourse within government agencies, environmental groups, and society at large, regardless of the fact that research has made evident there are number of inconsistencies with this hypothesis (Ives & Messerli 1989, CSE 1991). In this chapter my intention is to explore the process by which the conservation discourse was spread throughout Himachal Pradesh⁷ and came to dominate forest policy in this state.

This chapter is divided into six sections; in the first section I propose that the colonial agenda for forestry was firmly developed around interests in timber production, and that this was the impetus for the Forest Department's advocacy of forest conservation principles. My examination begins with an historical overview of economic forestry and then in the second section of this chapter I place my gaze on forest settlements in Himachal Pradesh. I move on to take a closer look at forest management in Kullu in the third section. In doing so I provide an analysis of the 1886 Anderson Settlement Report and discuss the development of the report and how it was received and understood in relation to concerns around economic forestry. It is important to note that even today this Report sits on the desks of most forest officers and guides decisions and discussions around forest management. In the fourth section I draw attention to the environmental degradation discourse prevalent during the colonial period and how it has evolved over time. This brings me to my analysis of the Revenue Department's resistance to the Forest Department's efforts to regulate forest resources. Here I propose that tensions between the two departments and their conflicting interests in forested lands pushed

⁷ My intention is to examine the rhetorical position that underlies policy pronouncements of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department, and the institutional process by which this position was shaped.

the Forest Department to stress the need for forest conservation by over-emphasizing their concerns around environmental degradation. In section 2.6 I look at non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and how their place in forestry has evolved. I conclude by summarizing the key points made in this chapter.

2.1 Economic Forestry in Himachal Pradesh: Timber Production

Mid-nineteenth century scientists claimed that grazing within forests slowed down timber production significantly. Given this finding the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department was keen to considerably restrict grazing within forested lands (Rajan 1994, 2006). As Saberwal (1997) notes while the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department eventually banned grazing in forests, their rationale for managing forest cover did change over time. Originally the Forest Department managed forest cover for commercial purposes, grazing and timber production were neither compatible nor symbiotic, and grazing was thought to be detrimental to timber production. In subsequent years rationale for managing forest cover changed from timber production to environmental stewardship. The Forest Department argued that their shift in objectives for conservation was a result of their commitment to ecological balance and maintaining the linkages between forests, climate, and hydrology (Saberwal, 1997).

Like much of India at this time, Himachal Pradesh Forest Department was focused on timber and fuel wood extraction (Tucker 1988). The extension of the northern railway line across Punjab⁸ had resulted in great demands for fuel and timber. Timber requirements for the northern line, in addition to the existing demands for timber in other parts of the country, prompted the beginning of forest conservation.⁹ A number of reports written in the mid-1800s show that timber production was the Forest Department's principle concern during this period; Dr. J.L. Stewart, Conservator of Forests (CF), produced numerous reports detailing the commercial viability of species such as the *deodar* (*Cedrus deodara*).¹⁰ Throughout

⁸ I make reference to this route again in Chapter 5 where I examine the medicinal plant trade and routes for medicinal plants.

⁹ See note by Governor General of India, following a tour of the Punjab Plains. Foreign Department, A Progs., March 1851, #676-68.

¹⁰ General Report on the Deodar Forests upon the Upper Chenab in Chota Lahual and Pangi; General Report on the Deodar forests of the Ravi; Report on the Fuel bearing tracts of the southern Punjab. Punjab PWD (Forests) A Progs., July 1866, # 37, 48

this period Forest Department officials relied on economic models to understand any observations related to decreasing supply of fuel resources and reported that there was a need for greater emphasis on forest conservation in ecologically vulnerable areas.

In one of Dr. J.L. Stewart's 1866 reports he brushes aside the value of forest conservation and states that:

.... it will be impossible to do justice to the management, on conservancy principles, of the whole of the tract in question, without neglecting matters which are more definitely the work of the various officers, and much more likely to be remunerative.

It is intended, and has been ordered, that the jungles in this tract lying should be incorporated with the Beas Division Forests; but only those forests which deserve and would be likely to repay conservancy, such as those of bamboo, *sal* and *chil*, ... were to have been permanently retained under the management of the Forest Department.

The excerpts of the report provide evidence that desired outputs from resource inputs were economic returns; the need for conservation to address declining climatic conditions or to maintain benefits of forest cover were nowhere stated either implicitly or explicitly. The first paragraph of this note makes evident that Dr. J.L. Stewart did not want his officers to divert from their focus from timber production to forest conservation; one may then assume that he had no plans to commit human resources towards conservation. A memo drafted by the Military Department noted the limited availability of fuel and corresponding increase in fuel costs, in response Dr. J.L. Stewart wrote that fuel prices in Dagshai, Sabathu and Kasauli cantonments (all in low-lying outer Himalayan hills) were significantly less than the cost of fuel in the plains. This information was enough for Dr. J.L. Stewart to decide that revisiting conservation was not an urgent matter, as noted in remarks to other members of government at that time, to 'undertake any planting for fuel...until the pressure becomes much more serious than present'¹¹. While in the early 1800s forest priorities were understood in terms of economics, in the late 1800s there was an increased understanding of forest's capacity to conserve water and soil.

Grove (1995) reveals that the Forest Department was established on the

¹¹ CF Punjab, to the Offg Secy. To the CF Punjab, March 1872. Punjab RAC (Forests) A Progs., July 1872, #2.

premise that forests and climate conditions were interconnected. However, Cleghorn's 1861 report on Himalayan forests does not make reference to the role large tracts of forests have in maintaining climatic conditions or the overall protection of the larger ecosystem. Cleghorn's reports consist of observations on the excessive felling that took place in a number of neighbouring valleys; he relies on these observations to explain the need for scientific forestry. In Cleghorn's note his over-arching message is the importance of identifying the most productive forests in the region, which he considered to be forests that were rich with commercial species. Issues related to climate or conservation were not addressed or mentioned in official reports from this period (1860-1870s).

In political debates with the Revenue Department, C.R. Ribbentrop brought forward yet another reason for forest conservation. In his opinion relatively small sections of local communities were benefitting from grazing within forests, while substantially large groups of people and communities were negatively impacted by unregulated use of forests that resulted in declining in timber stocks.¹² Referring to the *deodar* forests Ribbentrop highlights the benefits that come from curtailing grazing in *deodar* forest:

The area closed at present is extremely small and amounts only to some 500 acres out of a total forest area of 256,000 acres. The population of a large area of country in the plains depends on...forests for their timber supply, and it would be in the interests of a large public to close a very considerable area of the deodar-producing forests so as to ensure a continuous supply of deodar, the best and most valued building material I believe, that the public have a right to expect that a sufficiently large area be protected, and that their interests and convenience will be considered as well as those of the villagers who claim that the forests be kept open for grazing (1883:4).

C.R. Ribbentrop's commercial interests in conservation are underscored in the passage above. In the same 1883 memorandum Ribbentrop proposes that the Himalayan middle and high forests ensure 'a local rainfall, perennial springs, and rivulets useful for irrigation, protect underlying fields from erosion, and roads and grazing grounds from landslips, rolling stones, avalanches, and ravines'.¹³ While his

¹² Memorandum on Grazing in Government Forests and Waste-lands. B Ribbentrop, CF Punjab, Dec. 7, 1883. Basta 27, Serial 407, File 10 (127), HAS.

¹³ Memorandum on Grazing in Government Forests and Waste-lands. B Ribbentrop, CF Punjab, Dec. 7, 1883.

notes indicate an understanding of ecological balance, Ribbentrop's identification of forest species essential for conservation places emphasis almost entirely on *deodar* forests; he neglects to mention the importance of pine, oak or fir forests of the middle Himalayan range. C.R Ribbentrop's exclusion of some critical species and attention on commercial species makes evident that his primary interest in forested areas were largely commercial and not environmental.

2.2 Forest Settlements: Reshaping Forest Use and Access

In the introduction of this chapter I bring forward earlier studies focusing on history of forestry, policy and conservation that have emphasized appropriation of forests by colonial officers and with it the loss of all local rights (Guha 1989, Farooqui 1997, Gadgil and Guha 1993). Guha (1989) calls the late-nineteenth century colonial policy, which formed the basis of the Indian Forest Act of 1878, an 'annexationist' agenda that was focused on relieving the state of its forest wealth. Farooqui (1997:20) reiterates this in a study of Kumaon and explains that 'in the timber zones the Forest Department fully appropriated the rights of villagers'.

In 1855 the General Rules for the conservancy of forests in the Himalaya districts (which included the present state of Himachal Pradesh) were developed and issued by the Government of India (Guha 1990). Sir J. Lawrence was a key figure in drafting rules that were instrumental in setting up a system by which state rights could be applied over forest management efforts in the region. After the formation of the General rules, from 1855 until 1934, forest settlements were established in almost all the forested regions of Himachal Pradesh¹⁴ (Guha, 1990). While different officers were responsible for demarcating settlements in different regions and districts of Himachal Pradesh, they adopted a similar approach to surveying local forest rights.

Himachal Pradesh is one of the few states in India where local people still have rights to valuable timber from state forests (Singh 1998). Timber taken from local forests for construction purposes is specified as a 'right' in forest settlements, which implies it cannot be taken away unilaterally by the Forest Department without

Basta 27, Serial 407, File 10 (127), HAS:3.

¹⁴ Some of the major forest settlements in this region with the year of completion or approval: Jubbal 1915, Rawingarh and Dhadi 1900-1901, Tharoach 1895, Dhami 1980, Bhajji 1923-24, Koti 1890. For a more complete and descriptive listing of forest settlements in the entire state see Sharma 1996.

necessary compensation. This differs from other regions of India where people are allowed to use some forest products (usually non-timber) as a 'privilege' (Parker 1923; Rodger 1925). Privileges can be taken away by the Forest Department at will and without compensation (Parker 1923, Rodger 1925, Guha 1990). This distinction was first made by Baden Powell in 1875¹⁵ who defined rights as 'strict legal rights which unquestionable exist and have been expressly recorded in land settlement records' while privileges are 'concessions of the use of grazing, firewood, small wood, etc. which though not claimable as a legal right are always granted by the policy of the government for the convenience of the people'. Based on this distinction, the early forest settlements only recognized customary rights that were recorded; this eliminated most customary local rights (Chhatre 2003). In this context, Kullu forest settlements (discussed in the following section) were a very different from what was considered the norm at that time. Anderson's framing of settlements, and conversations with Forest Department officials, shaped my understanding of forest rights and regimes in Himachal Pradesh, more specifically in Kullu.

The forest settlements outlined in 1886 Anderson Report did not provide any new rights to people. As Bhattacharya (1996) points out, in pre-colonial time's people in Himachal Pradesh were freely able to access a number of forest products and related services from forests adjacent to their villages. When foresters began recording rights they also began to drastically limit local use of forested areas. With the demarcation and documentation of rights also came specific laws that dictated which forests village people could harvest trees from and when. This also resulted in a narrow definition of those who could use forests; now that use was formalized, users were determined by the government and not by local custom. State bureaucracy was now able to isolate non-right-holders in terms of their use of resources, while prior to this local communities were key decision makers in this regard. Right-holders for a particular forest were determined by legal decree, eliminating any local choice or changes over time.

What local village people previously considered an unlimited right to forest resources was now significantly curbed by recorded and limited supply of timber

¹⁵ Draft Bill prepared by Mr. Baden Powell. Dt. 3-8-1875 in B.Progs. Nos. 37-47, Dec. 1875, R. and A, National Archives of India, New Delhi. (Cited in Guha 1990:68).

and by new regulations that required the official sanction from the Forest Department. The Anderson Settlement Report (1886) does not state the number of trees one can take for personal use, however it does state that the right to timber was to be restricted to what was required to build a single house ‘sufficient for their requirements’ by the Forest Department (Anderson 1886:21)¹⁶. The Settlement Report goes on to significantly limit the rights to *deodar* trees, which includes dry or fallen *deodars* (Chhatre 2003). This restriction was established predominantly because *deodar* was one of the most durable timbers in the region and widely used for construction. In an effort to further limit the local use of *deodar* for house building, *deodar* was granted only for constructing doors and windows. Although landowners in Kullu have a legal right to timber they were not to exercise this right on their own free will. A right-holder must first seek permission from the appropriate Forest Department official and only after approval is granted can one exercise their right to forest resources. By establishing this system of settlements the state was successful in eliminating any uncertainty around patterns of resource use and rights, while also solidifying the idea that forests and trees were state property in law and in people’s minds (Baker 2003, Chhatre 2003). In Chapter 3 I come back again to this notion – the ability to exercise your rights only after approval from a government official. I explore how similar conditions are prevalent in present day forestry in the context of decentralization. I show that, in most instances, initiatives to devolve power to local bodies ultimately do more to strengthen and reinforce bureaucratic rule.

In defining rights as user rights, the government was successful in curbing village people's access and use of the forest significantly. In turn this process of defining rights essentially eliminated local people’s access to the growing timber market; as Tucker remarks, ‘they also made the policy decision that villagers should not prosper beyond subsistence from market sales of timber or livestock products’ (1997:13). In the 1886 Settlement Report Anderson goes on to recommend that ‘rights are subject to the condition that all right-holders shall render assistance in extinguishing any fire occurring in any forest within which they have rights’

¹⁶ In reading this Settlement Report again it has me thinking about the work I currently do on land acquisition and compensation resulting from large mining companies’ interest in acquiring land for their project and operations. In a recent project for Barrick local people being resettled were given a house that was the same area as the one they previously lived in “area for area”.

(1886:24); the objective of this recommendation is to link user rights to responsibility towards the state. Anderson's proposal not only provides the state with arbitrary authority, to be exercised at their discretion, it also reinforced the state's proprietary rights over forests. Thus the forest settlement was successful in shrinking existing rights by bringing them under tighter state control.

As Guha (1983) points out the primary objective forest settlements were to keep forests for commercial use. This was achieved through a series of local regulations that led to the formation of the India Government Forests Act of 1865 and 1878, allowing the government to assert its property right over forests (Baker 2003, Chhatre 2003). However, these regulations simply provided general principles and frameworks, specific forest settlements for different regions were to be guided by these principles and built within these frameworks (Bhattacharya 1986). The initial intent was that settlements would be developed around people's existing rights; however, in many regions settlements neglected to take into account existing rights, particularly where existing rights extended to valuable timber (Baker 2003, Chhatre 2003, Guha 1983). While the 1878 Forest Act's dominant focus was to increase the number of forested areas under state control (Chhatre 2003), there were some within the Forest Department who voiced the need to recognize customary forest uses as legitimate rights (Chhatre 2003, Guha 1990).

Even after Indian independence national forest policies in many ways continued to be those that were established while the country was a colony. The 1878 Forest Act (with an amendment in 1927) is still in place and provides the overarching framework for forest management. A draft of a revised Forest Act was circulated by the government in 1982; however, representatives of grassroots organizations criticized it for being similar in almost all regards to the 1878 Act, giving the Forest Department more control over forest management (Fernandez & Kulkarni 1983).

2.3 Settlements in Kullu: 1886 Anderson Settlement Report

J. B Lyall, a settlement officer visiting Kullu in 1866, demarcated a few small pieces of *deodar* and *kail*, to prohibit grazing. This set in motion the first colonial forest settlement in the area. Following J. B Lyall, in 1872 D. Dunbar, a British forest officer at this time, created a set of rules that were to be applied to the management

of unreserved forests in Kullu. D. Dunbar and J.B Lyall's work in Kullu were the first steps towards formalized management, however because this region was relatively remote, many of the administrative duties and much of the authority was transferred to the *Negis* (local revenue collector) rather than a British officer (Chhatre 2003). *Negis* had the authority to give permission at any one time, to one person, to harvest up to 40 trees of any variety other than *deodar* for building purposes (Chhatre 2003). Because *deodar* was commercially valuable only a forest officer had the authority to grant permits for harvest, and collect payment. D. Dunbar's rules, although never officially accepted by the government, were the basis of forest management before 1886 and were a precursor to the timber distribution policy now in place in Kullu.

From 1883 until 1886 Anderson was demarcating primary forest settlements in Kullu. Although the settlement was completed in 1886 and local officials began implementing the provisions of the settlement soon after, the settlement was officially recognized ten years later in 1896¹⁷ (cited in Trevor 1920). In the decade between the completion of the settlement and its official approval there was a significant amount of debate within the Forest Department on the question of local rights and the implications of demarcating forests as either reserved or protected. The 1878 Indian Forest Act has two chapters that outline forest management – Chapter Two guide's management of reserved forests while Chapter Four provides guidance on how to manage protected forest areas. Forests in Kullu were predominantly classified as protected and thus managed by the rules and regulations outlined in Chapter Four. Very few forests were declared 'reserves';¹⁸ foresters at the time felt that 'only those forests that were settled under Chapter Two whose remoteness and inaccessibility rendered them of little use to the people' (Trevor 1920:8) should be declared reserved. Even today Anderson's settlement remains the primary source for defining right holders and their rights; while in Himachal Pradesh I often witnessed the District Forest Officer (DFO) and the CF referring to the settlement report to understand a claim or use rights of a particular area of forests that was brought to them by a village member. The Anderson's settlement report (Anderson 1886:36) made provisions for agricultural land, which were applicable to

¹⁷ Punjab government letter No137, 6th March 1896 authorizes provisions of the Anderson settlement (cited in Trevor 1920).

¹⁸ Punjab government letter No. 511, dated 28th November 1883. (Cited in Trevor 1920:70).

anyone that paid land use rights for timber. Timber was to be used strictly within the *kothi* or revenue village thereby ensuring that local people did not sell timber; which was granted as a distribution right. More specifically, Anderson's report allowed local landowners rights to graze cattle on government land, acquire timber for building purposes, collect grass and leaves for fodder, collect leaves and humus for manure, collect wood for agricultural and domestic implements, collect wood for fuel, torches, charcoal, and for funerals; and finally medicinal roots, flowers, fruits, dry fallen wood (except deodar, walnut, box and ash), splinters of *deodar* and *kail* stumps, bamboo for food and medicinal purposes.

Kullu did not have large tracts of forests like those found just to its south and west; the terrain was difficult and the region relatively isolated with inadequate means for transportation. Foresters thus deemed this region void of valuable timber (for commercial purposes). C.G Barnes, Deputy Commissioner in 1851, toured the region and decided after his visit that '*deodar* to the value of more than Rs. 5000 per annum could not be supplied from Kulu' (Stebbing 1921: 265). The first working plans for forests in Kullu estimated that timber supplies from Kullu would most likely not exceed Rs. 24, 3000 (Fisher 1897) in revenue. During this time Hazara and Kangra, regions adjacent to Kullu, were considered to be the only well-wooded districts (Stebbing 1921:275). The area's perceived lack of commercially valuable tree species convinced foresters that there was no need to establish strict rules and regulations in the form of settlements (see Fitzpatrick 1894). Timber rights in Kullu may not have been a significant concern for foresters; however, forest rights were believed to have political significance. Anderson's (1886) settlement report generated a number of debates between foresters who felt that timber was an indispensable forest product for local populations. They strongly believed that taking away these rights would lead to unrest and most likely protest similar to what was prevalent in neighbouring regions. Symbols of a new system – forest guards, boundary lines, and guard huts – become targets of attack, and forest fires often originated in the heart of reserved forests where all use-rights had been taken away (Bhattacharya 1986). A significant amount of analysis is available on protests in the form of petitions, complaints, and defiance to rules established for forest use by authorities (Tucker 1983; Bhattacharya 1986, Guha 1983, Pathak 1994, Agrawal 2005). These types of incidents were also described in forest officer's reports and memos, as were their concerns that restriction of rights would most certainly bring

unrest. It is likely that protests in regions adjacent to Kullu influenced forest officer's analysis of the effectiveness of a settlement for Kullu.¹⁹ Historical records are largely absent of any documentation related to widespread protest in Kullu; I was able to find only one record that hinted at discontent. There was record of a fire that may have resulted from people protesting to express their dissatisfaction with forest management regimes being established in the area (Samler 1935: 41, Tireman 1927:2, 4). This fire occurred almost 40 years after the Anderson report and after the completion of the forest working plan in 1920 (Tucker 1997:22). It was estimated that 26,000 hectares of forests were damaged in this fire (Samler 1935: 41, Tireman 1927:2, 4).

While some officers saw village people's demands as entirely unreasonable (Powell 1876), others were extremely concerned about popular reaction and emphasized the need for social stability (Lyll 1892, Fitzpatrick 1894). Baden Powell, CF at the time, felt demands of local people were often unreasonable and could not be satisfied. He notes:

People want nothing less than to have the *rakhs* given over to them absolutely, to graze everywhere, and to cut what they like, and where they like, and to derive the whole profits of sales of fuel to cantonments and public works" (Powell 1876).²⁰

On the other hand, J.B Lyall criticized Anderson for his harsh and severe take on rights in the settlement report stating his report was 'too limited a view of the rights of the owners of the soil and too liberal a view of the rights of the government' (Lyll 1892). Fitzpatrick was also critical of Anderson's Kullu forest settlement report once he had toured the region. In one of his notes on the Kullu forest settlement he wrote:

....for the sake of improving it (i.e. the forest) we should be justified in harassing the people with any very strict system of conservancy... There are many small matters in which the forest officials can make concessions to the people and thus conciliate them and secure their support (Fitzpatrick 1894: para 7 & 38).

¹⁹ Some of the major forest settlements in this region with the year of completion or approval: Jubbal 1915, Rawingarh and Dhadi 1900-1901, Tharoach 1895, Dhami 1980, Bhajji 1923-24, Koti 1890. For a more complete and descriptive listing of forest settlements in the entire state see Sharma 1996.

²⁰ Record from the state archives, Selections from the Records of the office of the Financial Commissioners, Punjab (SRFCP), No. 16. (Cited in Bhattacharya 1986:127).

Bhattacharya (1986) argues that the colonial state was certain that to maintain control and minimize dissent it was best to provide local people with some allowance, in particular those who owned land:

The form in which the forest settlement was finalized in 1897 was thus a product of over thirty years of history in which the rules that had been formulated initially were changed under the pressure of opposition and the imperatives of the changing situation (Bhattacharya 1986:128).

In Kullu there was very little interest in revisiting settlements around forest rights, and rights were usually settled swiftly. However, these types of settlements continue to be unpopular and are generally challenged by the public. Resettlement of rights is a potentially explosive process where local rights would have to be recorded again. If existing rights are restricted, right holders must be compensated. This process is much more difficult and risky for the state in a democratic society like India. Unpopular actions by the state are most likely to impact the outcome of elections, and will most certainly be taken up by the media²¹. Because of the complexity and sensitivity of negotiating rights and the need to compensate for rights that are taken by the state or a project proponent, Anderson's settlement report continues to be an operational document and guides almost all decisions related to local people's rights to forests.

2.4 Where have all the forests gone?

Forest settlements were completed in Kullu in 1896, and these settlements established firm measures to regulate grazing in forested areas. Regulations were now in place detailing the distance sheep and goat herders were required to move daily; and any herder that stayed longer than the allotted one-day maximum in one location was fined; this was the first time that the grazing fees were imposed. In 1914, to reduce the number of animals local people owned, two additional taxes were introduced— a cattle tax and an additional grazing tax imposed on the shepherds.

²¹ This is something I have seen time and again in a mining context: resettlement of rights and negotiating compensation for loss of rights, and use of media to convey discontent.

Annual reports from 1904 until 1914 reveal that the most significant concern for the Forest Department during this period was the effect of grazing on forested lands. However, forest officer reports from this period do not make a clear distinction between sites that were impacted by grazing and those that were not, making a general and overarching recommendation for better conservation. The following observation in the CF's Forests Annual Report illustrates the generality of writings from this period:

.... increase of sheep grazing in the hills is one that is yearly becoming of more importance to the community, and urgently demands the inauguration of a fixed, consistent policy. The increase in the number and size of the flocks is only too marked in the acres of hills, where it is rapidly causing the actual denudation of many acres of hillsides. ... for example, either in consequence of the increase in flocks, or because of the destruction of grazing grounds by denudation, or of both, grazing is so scarce that it is not advisable to leave their hereditary grazing grounds and to take their flocks elsewhere for winter grazing. Where forest(s) cannot provide sufficient grazing for the flocks, it is obvious that they have no value as forests for the prevention of denudation. It is more obvious that with denudation, and without grazing grounds, it will not be possible for the hill people to continue to exist in their country.²²

The citation above raises a number of questions; first, the suggestion that the entire range of the lower hills was under intense and growing grazing pressures and causing the 'rapid...denudation of many acres of hillsides'. Reports are absent of hard data that would support such a claim. In later reports Holland, Assistant CF, describes the lower hills as 'well wooded'. Second, statements made in the above paragraph lead one to believe that if current conditions continue, the resulting pressure could threaten livelihoods in the region to such an extent that they will completely vanish. Yet livestock grazing in this area continues to this day, and is still very much a key element of rural livelihoods. The depiction of grazing and its impacts on forests in this report differs greatly from what is observed currently – grazing thriving in midst of managed forested areas.

District Commissioner (DC) Fagan, a colonial official during the time of the Annual Report, also felt that the Himalayan hills were over-grazed, as documented in his field notes:

²² Progress Report of the Forest Department for the year 1907-08, p.6

Understanding by denudation the disappearance of trees, brushwood, grass and the humus content of the surface soil, I agree with Mr. Connolly [settlement officer] in thinking that the process is certainly going on, though the progress hitherto made has not perhaps been very rapid. Certainly I see no ground for hoping or for anticipating that it will become less rapid in the future in the tracts which have been affected. Erosion as the immediate and primary result of denudation is not, I think, very prominently noticeable at present except here and there in limited areas. The general constitution of the soil...appears to me, as a rule, such as to favor rapid erosion.²³

Fagan's comments 'ground for hoping or anticipating that [erosion] will become less rapid in the future' show that he was aware of the Forest Department's position, however his comments also indicate that there was no evidence of soil erosion in the Himalayan hills. Settlement Officer Connelly made a similar comment: '...denudation is nowhere extensive, but the danger is that it will increase in time.'²⁴ Records indicate that contemporary foresters were beginning to notice differing patterns of erosion throughout the region, which prompted an interest in understanding why different locations had differing extents and types of erosion. Assistant CF, Holland, reported on the condition of the lower slopes of the Himalaya:

The lower slopes of the Himalayas are well-wooded with scrub and bamboo jungle, and the rock which occurs is harder than the sandstone Erosion is very slight indeed, and is only met with locally along the foot of the hills where its action is very slow.

... the appearance of a mass of ravines, peaks, cliffs, scraps, and bare slopes densely crowded together varying shades of brown, for vegetation is very scarce indeed.²⁵

Saberwal (1997) found that with the retransfer of forests to the Revenue Department from the Forest Department in 1919, in addition to local resistance to policies limiting local access and use of forests, the Forest Department's discussions pertaining to detrimental aspects of grazing and erosion became even broader. This approach to understanding pressures to forestry diminished the value of specific observations already brought forward by foresters – that erosion patterns in fact

²³ Punjab RAD (Forests) A Progs., April 1914, #18.

²⁴ V.Connolly, Settlement Officer, Dehra-Hamirpur-Una, to the Comm. Jullunder, March 5-12, 1912. Punjab RAD)(Forests) A progs., April 1913, #19.

²⁵ Report on Denudation in the Siwaliks and Lower Himalayas between the Sutleg and Ghaggar rivers. June 7, 1912. Punjab RAD (Forests) A Progs., July 1912, #6.

varied from area to area (Saberwal 1997). Conservator J.W. Grieve's 1919 report outlined the 'terrible' condition of the lower Himalayan forests. His report provided descriptions of forests that differed dramatically from those described in Holland's report and by Fagan and Connelly quoted above. Grieve's description of these lower hills suggests that the disappearance of the forests, the soil, and eventually, the herders themselves was imminent:

The areas grazed over consist mainly of scrub jungle...sufficient natural tree regeneration [is not] possible, as under the intensive grazing practiced but few seedlings have a chance of establishing themselves. The scrub has in many cases already disappeared, leaving a series of sun-dried bare ridges, from which all soil is in process of rapid erosion...It is therefore clear that a continuance of existing conditions is in process of achieving not only the destruction of the forests, but also the diminution of the means of sustenance of the herds themselves. It is obvious that the right of grazing as now practiced violates the fundamental condition underlying the exercise of any right, namely that the factors necessary to its permanent satisfaction must be assured.²⁶

L.B. Holland was appointed to Deputy CF to address concerns related to the rapid degradation and destruction of forest lands. Holland relied on analysis and commentary provided in Baden-Powell's 1879 report to support his claim that forest conditions were dismal, (as cited in Saberwal 1997):

One may march for miles and miles with nothing in view but bare mud-coloured crests and rugged slopes, rarely dotted with grayish browsed down bushes, while an occasional *kikar* bush that has sprung up out of reach is alone green and flourishing.²⁷

Holland continues on to report:

Even today this is still the condition of the hills above the town of Jejon and in the Manaswal Jagir, and it exactly describes it as the writer first saw it in 1914 and as the greater part is still today.²⁸

Holland does not make reference to other sections of Baden-Powell's report,

²⁶ Grieve, J.W.A. 1920. Note on the economics of nomadic grazing as practiced in Kangra district. IF 28:333.

²⁷ Quoted in the Report of the Punjab Erosion Committee, 1932. Superintendent, Government Printing, Lahore. 1934. p. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid*

sections in which he also noted that there were fertile areas in the region with a wide diversity of vegetation. Nevertheless, destruction and degradation in the Himalayas continued to be discussed in terms of overgrazing and erosion throughout the 1930s and the 1940s. This perception made way for increasing attention and intervention from the Forest Department.²⁹ Popular opinion that grazing was in fact detrimental to forestry was supported by forest officers' stark descriptions of the region. During this period photography also played an important role in shaping people's perceptions and ideas. Reports conveniently presented photos that supported claims that grazing was destroying forest lands. The selective presentation of an issue or topic through photography was, and still is, a common method of persuading the masses³⁰. Photographs presented in forester's reports depict the effects of erosion at one particular time of the year and in one particular area; they neglected to show the variations in vegetation and forest cover in different seasons and in differing geographies.

In the 1930s foresters continued to explain past declines in forest condition in terms of improper land use practices:

Many years ago it had been clearly proved and recognized as a universal phenomenon that destruction of forest growth in mountain country, without compensation such as terracing and regular cultivation, led to a tremendous increase of soil erosion, avalanches, destructive floods, drying up of water springs, over burdening the rivers with silt and boulders. Where the river debouched on the plains, this burden of detritus is deposited far and wide over fertile cultivation, wiping out whole villages and towns, silting up canals and even mighty Empires have crumbled before the irresistible advance of man-made deserts and sheet erosion. Thus the change of the once fertile lands of Mesopotamia into desert has been ascribed by many authorities to the destruction of the natural vegetation by man and his cattle, while the ruination of hundreds of villages in the Himalaya, due to the destruction of the forests in the adjoining hills, is a well known phenomenon (Symthies 1938:705).³¹

Ultimately forest policy in Himachal Pradesh became characterized by the

²⁹ Holland, L.B. 1928. Report on the denudation and erosion in the low hills of Punjab. Government Press, Lahore; Coventry, B.O. 1929. Denudation in the Punjab hills. Indian Forest Records, Part II; Gorrie, R.M. 1937. The foothills grazing problem in India. Agriculture and Livestock in India 7:579-584.

³⁰ I have seen this often in the mining work I currently do. In one instance on a gold mine in Tanzania, I came across a publication that was claiming the horrible impacts to human health as a result of contamination from mine activities, yet in my three months on site I had not once heard of any such issue nor seen anyone suffering the same way as the person depicted in the photograph – this is not to say there were no impact resulting from the mine.

³¹ Smythies, E.A. 1938. Soil Erosion problems in India. IF 64:704-708.

belief that excessive human use of forested areas resulted in degraded land. Widespread acceptance of this belief is a cause for concern because there has been very limited examination of factors that contribute to degradation. There was little debate within the Forest Department regarding the nature of degradation in the state, and there continues to be a general absence of study into the relative impact of grazing or other human land use practices on the region's resources.

2.5 Different Departments, Different Priorities

Until the formation of the Indian Forest Department in 1865, the Revenue Department had solely managed interests related to forested lands. A power struggle between the Revenue Department and Forest Department ensued soon after the Forest Department was established. Guha (1990), Rajan (1994), Rangarajan (1996), Sivaramakrishnan (1997, 1999), and Agrawal (2005) provide evidence and discussion of this conflict in their research. The Revenue Department was concerned that their status and authority would diminish significantly if the Forest Department was granted responsibility for forested lands. The primary fear was that transferring control of forested lands to the Forest Department would adversely impact the DC's ability to govern his district.³²

Soon after the Forest Department was formed, the Revenue Department was able to stop transfers of land to the Forest Department by claiming that the Department lacked the human resources and capacity to manage these lands. While the Revenue Department was concerned with their role and responsibilities in relation to the administration of forested lands, they also felt that the restrictions to forest use and access the Forest Department was keen to impose would be detrimental to local populations. The Revenue Department indicated that there was discontent among local residents, and that severely restricting use and access would most likely result in unrest. The assertion that keeping rural populations relatively content was a means to ensure peace was the cornerstone of the Revenue Department's opposition to the Forest Department's priorities around conservation.

To mitigate any discontent that could arise from restrictions placed on forested lands, the Revenue Department proposed that the DC, the official representative of

³² See, for example, FC Punjab to the Secy. to Govt. Punjab, PWD, 27 July 1865. PWD, A. Progs., Feb. 1866, no.18.

the Revenue Department in a district, be granted discretionary powers to drop some of the restrictions the Forest Department were keen to implement. This would give the DC room to accommodate local interests, particularly when local populations were experiencing unforeseen hardship. The 1884 legislation, which outlined the reporting structure for district level officers, placed the DFO below the DC.³³ This legislation was instrumental in formally granting the Revenue Department authority over forested lands in the district.

There are a number of examples of strained relationships between the two departments from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. In 1913 the DC Colonel Powney Thompson, suggested the surrounding degraded forests indicated that local populations were unsupportive of forest policies presently in place. His recommendation to remedy the situation was to transfer of forests from the Forest Department to the Revenue Department, forests that were originally under the jurisdiction of the Revenue Department.³⁴ As was to be expected the Forest Department vehemently opposed Colonel Powney Thompson's recommendation with CF R. McIntosh stating that 'in absence of scientific treatment [the transferred forests] will inevitably degrade'.³⁵ Nevertheless, in 1919 more than half the forested lands of the district were transferred to the control of the Revenue Department. The two Departments argued about priorities for forested lands right into the 1930s. The forest sector was also the hardest hit by cutbacks in government expenditures. Foresters may have adopted a discourse emphasizing deforestation and its detrimental impacts in an attempt to convince the government that funding forestry was paramount for the greater good. There is a need for analysis of rhetoric produced by government agencies whose arguments relied, and continue to rely on, local issues and needs as a means to push forward their institutional priorities and agendas.³⁶

The inability of the Revenue Department and Forest Department to seek out common interests and resolve competing ones made it increasingly difficult for the

³³ Punjab Forest A. Progs., May 1885, no. 10 Rajan (1994) points out that the question of the subordination of Forest Department officials to their Revenue Department counterparts remained a central concern of foresters in India and other parts of the British empire even in the 1940s.

³⁴ Powney Thompson to Commissioner, Jullundur Div., 30 Dec. 1911. Punjab RAD (Forests) A Progs., April 1913, no. 17.

³⁵ McIntosh, CF Eastern Circle, Punjab, to the Sen. Secy. to the FC Punjab, 13-15 Jan. 1919. Punjab RAD (Forests) A Progs., Dec 1919, no. 90.

³⁶ There is a need to analysis the rhetoric of the Revenue Department and other government agencies whose arguments relied on local issues and needs to benefit their own institutions.

Forest Department to implement their policies for forest resources in the region. Furthermore, the Forest Department was left with little other than the destruction of forested lands rhetoric to promote their agenda for conservation. This rhetoric was focused on costs related to social and political instability that would result from flooding and erosion. Forest officers continue to adopt this line of argument in crafting present day policies and priorities for forested lands in the region.

Records from the early decades of the twentieth century do not indicate that tensions between the Forest Department and the Revenue Department prevailed. However, the Forest Department continued to be unsuccessful in implementing policies that primarily focused on restricting access and use of forest resources. The difficulties encountered by the Forest Department during this period may have resulted from political interest in forested lands.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's the Forest Department's rhetoric regarding the degradation of forested lands and village people's complaints that forest conservancy was making it increasingly difficult for them to meet their livelihood requirements continued. Official correspondence from 1932 indicates the first mention of village institutions as a means to manage forested lands. Deputy Commissioner, Divisional Forest Officer, and Deputy Conservator of Forests for the Punjab region first expressed their interest in creating *panchayats* to manage forested lands that had not been demarcated. The Deputy Commissioner was keen to explore the possibility of preparing a joint proposal with the Divisional Forest Officer, however Deputy Conservator of Forests put an end to this, arguing that in the region there were two primary types of forests "a) tracts in which wood and timber supplies are abundant and b) tracts in which such supplies are deficient. In the former no change is called for and in the latter a mere change of agency cannot increase the number of trees available to the right holders"³⁷. There were already examples of *van panchayats* managing forests during this time, for example in Kumaon *panchayats* were instrumental in management since 1925. However there is no indication that debates in the Punjab region were influenced by the experience in Kumaon with *panchayats*. However, there was reference to efforts taken previously

³⁷ 3 Aug. 1932, Basta 30, Serial 460, File 10(194), Handing over UPFs to *panchayats*, DC Records, Himachal Pradesh State Archives, Shimla

to involve local populations in managing common lands³⁸.

At a conference in 1935, Chief Conservator of Forests for Punjab, H.M Glover, concluded that,

the conference is of the opinion that the state of the undemarcated forests is so deplorable that the present policy for their management must be changed. The practicability of forming village forests should be examined, and the government may kindly be asked to appoint a committee to decide what particular steps should be taken in each district of the outer Himalayas.³⁹

As a result in 1937 a Commission of Enquiry, to be chaired by Sir Colin, was established by the Punjab Government. The key questions guiding the enquiry were:

"What difficulties are experienced by those who live in and near forests as a result of the existing system of forest administration?"

"How can these people be best interested in the conservation of the forests?"

"How can their co-operation with the Forest Department be encouraged and secured?"

Local populations in Rawalpindi, Kangra, Attock, and Jhelum were consulted via public hearings. Following these hearings the Garbett Commission recommended that a specific plan be prepared to enable local authorities to manage trees. This plan was to place all categories of forests under village forests. These forests were to be managed in the interest of village people, under the supervision of the Forest Department and in cooperation with the *panchayat*. In response to the Garbett Commission, the Punjab Government ordered the Forest Department to draft specific measures to prevent any further erosion, while maintaining the interests of the province.

Records show that between the 1960s and 1990s the Chief Minister, the Forest Minister, and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, began to involve themselves in the management of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. These senior politicians were keen that village people's concerns were accommodated and in this vein were determined to see forested lands, that were originally forbidden, opened

³⁸ undated, Note on the improvement of pasture lands in the upper hills of Rawalpindi District, Basta 30, Serial 460, File 10(194), Handing over UPFs to *panchayats*, Kangra DC Records, Himachal Pradesh State Archives, Shimla

³⁹ quoted in O.P.Sharma, 'Co-operative Forest Societies in District Kangra : A Critical Appraisal', paper presented at the Workshop on formulation of new community based people oriented afforestation scheme, 27-28 August, 1998, HP Forest Department, Shimla

for local use. To do this, regulations were relaxed for extended periods of time (these incidents were communicated to me by Himachal Pradesh Forest Department officials in 2004).⁴⁰

2.6 Minor Forest Products to Non Timber Forest Products

Historically the term ‘minor forest products’ was used to describe products other than timber. The term ‘minor’ encapsulates the historical underpinnings of ‘scientific forestry’, and makes evident that colonial interest in forestry was primarily timber and associated revenue. Sundar (2003:86) outlines that the difference between ‘major’ and ‘minor’ forest produce is,

cross-cut by the distinction between plantation and non-plantation products.. Nonetheless, in many other respects a series of implicit dichotomies can be drawn between ‘major’ and ‘minor’ products. Major products involve a small number of (mostly) large items, which take a relatively long time to regenerate and have high unit values relative to their labour input. Their presence or absence in an area is easy for outsiders to assess. Minor products typically involve the reverse characteristics, requiring large numbers of small items, on a yearly, seasonal or more frequent cycle, with large labour inputs depending on intimate knowledge of specific local forest environments.

To obtain a clear understanding of NTFPs place in colonial forestry it is helpful to consider how the Forest Department understood ‘forestry’ and what they understood to be the prevailing norm in terms of forests. A ‘normal’ forest was the ideal in terms of stock, age class distribution, one in which produce could be removed without causing a decrease in future yields (Mathur 1968). A ‘normal’ forest was one by which deficiencies that would impact yields could be understood. Prasad (1994) explains that major forest products were those that generally exported profitably, products like timber, fuelwood and charcoal. Forest produce largely utilized by local populations for local use were termed minor forest products, this included a wide array of items: hides, horns, ivory; to about 3000 plant species, including canes, drugs, spices, fibres, flosses, grasses, gums, resins and oleoresins, lac, tans, dyes, vegetable oils and oil seeds, leaves (Maithani 1994). Scientific

⁴⁰ The current Member of Legislative Assembly in Kullu District; he quite frequently contacts the Forest Department on behalf of village people to voice their grievances regarding forest related issues. He also has a stake in insuring that forest management is conducive to local needs. He is the biggest trader of non-timber forest products and of illegal timber in Kullu.

forestry's focus on major forest products was often at the expense of minor forest products, management practices 'affected their future regeneration and sustainability' (Jeffery *et al.* 2003). Jeffery and his colleagues explain that (2003: 93) large tracts of,

multi-species forests have been transformed into pure stands, and the 'health' of a forest has been defined in terms of tree stems rather than canopy cover and density of undergrowth. Thus plantation practices include close planting of saplings so as to force plants to grow higher to catch sunlight and in the process acquire cleaner boles. The entire science of forest management is based on thinning the bushier trees, and ensuring straight boles.

When 'minor forest products' importance increased commercially, the use of 'minor' to describe these products was questioned. In 1954, at the World Forestry Congress, the term 'Economic produce other than Wood' was brought forward as an alternative, however this term was considered too cumbersome, and over time was replaced by 'Non-wood forest products' or 'Non-timber forest products' (Rajan 1994:8). Regardless of the increasing awareness with respect to the economic and cultural value of NTFP's, up until the 1988 forest policy, forest management continued to be shaped around commercially viable 'major' forest products.

The emergence of trade in 'minor' forest products made way for interaction between forest dwellers and settled agriculturalists. Bayly writes: "The tribesmen and nomads furnished the settled with beeswax, honey, spices, carriage, milk and soldiers. The settled provided the fringes with money, cloth and grain" (Bayly 1988: 31). However, Rangarajan (1994: 152) points out, these did not create a complete system by which to manage forests. By contrast most aspects of forest management were secondary to timber production, which was necessary to fulfil demands resulting from shipbuilding and railway expansion during the colonial period. During this time local rights of use to forested lands and forest products (both minor and major) were reigned in considerably. Gadgil and Guha (1993) make note of the 'annexationist' position of the 1878 Forest Act, and conclude that the Act sought to vest all ownership and control over non-cultivated lands in the State, using the practice during pre-colonial times as justification (Gadgil & Guha 1993: 118-121, 136-9). The three-fold distinction between prohibited (reserved), partially prohibited (protected) and open (village) forests, enshrined in the Forest Act of 1878, has been well documented (Gadgil & Guha 1993: 134).

NTFPS are playing an increasingly important role in global, national and local markets. To address shift in priorities around forest products the 1998 National Forest Policy emphasized improving NTFP Production. A number of initiatives like the Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Reform Project (described further in Chapter 3) were also established to address the interests in forest produce, particularly interests around NTFP's. In some States, Forest Corporations have been created to handle collection and marketing of nationalized NTFPs. Forest administration in most of the States regulates collection of NTFPs in accordance with rules and regulations applicable in that State. In JFM areas, the JFM resolutions and MoUs are signed to govern the collection of NTFPs by the participating communities (Chapter 3 dwelves into this further).

2.7 Conclusions

The Forest Department's advocacy of forest conversation corresponded with a period of increased timber extraction from forests. Commercial extraction increased from 1.5 million cubic feet at the end of the 1920s to more than 20 million cubic feet by the 1970s (Tucker 1983). This indicates an inconsistency between the Forest Department's concerns for degradation of forests and their ability to address the decrease in forest cover. It leads one to question why the Forest Department decided to use forest degradation as their rationale to push forward their agenda for forest management. Forester's notes, documents and reports do not indicate any attempt to separate erosion resulting from natural processes and erosion resulting from human activities, an important consideration when identifying the cause of degradation in the Himalayas (Hamilton 1987; Ives & Messerli 1989; CSE 1991). The documentation available tends to provide subjective scenarios where specific local occurrences of landslips are used to explain state-wide trends (Hamilton 1987; CSE 1991). Scientific narratives that associate human activities to ecological change are often utilised to rationalise state control over resources (Peluso 1992; Rangan 1997; Sivaramakrishnan 1997). Fairhead and Leach's (1995) examination of the conservation policy applied to vegetation management in Guinea reveals that the analysis used to explain degradation had not actually taken place. They explain that the assumptions drawn 'have strength and credibility in large part because they are linked together, diffused, and stabilized within "narratives" (Roe 1991), that is,

stories of apparently incontrovertible logic which provide scripts and justifications for development action' (Fairhead & Leach 1995:1023).

Two main characters of Himachal Pradesh forestry were discussed in this chapter. First the chapter begins by showing that over a period of time the Forest Department's interests in forestry shifted from protection of economic interests to conservation of forest resources with the goal of decreasing the impact of human population's dependency on forests. Second, the on-going struggle between the Forest and Revenue Departments for the control of forested land correlates to changes in policy objectives – from one that was commercial to one that was advocating for forest conservation. By placing my analysis within this institutional context I have demonstrated that bureaucratic politics of the nineteenth and twentieth century's played an instrumental role in the development of forestry that centred almost exclusively on specific objectives.

What comes to the forefront is that in Himachal Pradesh increasing timber extraction and the growing environmental concerns about deforestation were simultaneous. Because the extensive grazing leads to a reduction in tree growth, the Forest Department was, and continues to be, concerned with reducing livestock grazing pressures within state forests. However, the Revenue Department's opposition to increased restrictions on forest lands resulted in the Forest Department exaggerating environmental consequences of grazing within forested areas. In response to the Revenue Department's opposition the Forest Department implemented policies that were intended to reduce timber use and the presence of herders. The Forest Department's method to do so show extensive erosion and overuse, extrapolating one incidence to represent an entire region, is disconcerting. Extrapolating environmental consequences of human activities in one region to another continues to be common in present day discourse of global degradation. For example, in East Africa overgrazing is common around water holes and major towns where you find groups of herders; however, any degradation is limited to a small area within the entire landscape and open areas tend to be in much better condition. Typically, however, ecologists and development officials have extrapolated from isolated examples of degradation to make situations seem more extensive and urgent than they actually are (Livingston 1991). The rationale for the GHNP also stems from the degradation rhetoric prevalent throughout the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. In this case degradation of forests has expanded for the historical

reference to timber and fuelwood to include NTFPs. In the following chapters I examine different aspects of conservation and development agendas centred on endangered Himalayan medicinal plant species.

CHAPTER 3 CONTEMPORARY FORESTRY: DECENTRALIZATION

As outlined in Chapter 2, Indian forestry was heavily influenced by colonial political economy – revenue from land and timber being key considerations in how forested lands would be managed. Conflicting interests between different departments in the colonial government impacted the way in which priorities around forested lands were established. Himachal Pradesh Forest Department's attempts to secure exclusive control of forests were foiled repeatedly and a significant amount of energy was expended in defining the limits of their powers. Tucker (1983) explains that Forest Department officials were frequently tied up in negotiations with village communities in addition to the Revenue Department (as highlighted in Chapter 2). By the 1930's tensions between landowners and tenants were making it increasingly difficult for the Forest Department to exercise any control over territories that it wanted to protect (Section 2.5 in Chapter 2 looked at the Garbett Commission and its examination of these tensions) (Saberwal 1997, Chhatre 2000). The 1990's saw the rise of decentralization policies such as JFM (Sundar 2000) These types of policies were attempting to engage communities in forest management, which in some instances had the potential of reducing the direct involvement of the Forest Department in affairs related to forest management (Saberwal 1997, Agrawal & Ribot 1999).

Decentralization has become one of the key indicators of institutional change in all government sectors (UNCDF 2000:5-11; Totemeyer 2000; Dillinger 1994; Fisher 1991). Governments in Latin America, Asia and Africa have been noted to move forward with goals to decentralize decision-making in a variety of areas, including environmental management, healthcare, welfare, education, and credit provisions (OCED 2007:47). Policy-makers, governments, NGOs and donors argue that these types of reforms make way for institutions that are efficient, while being responsive to citizen needs (Ribot and Agrawal 1999, Manor 2000, 2004). Advocates of decentralization believe that it results in effective, efficient and appropriate development, which is sustained over a longer period (Manor 2004). The benefits of decentralization is believed to be that local institutions are better able to ascertain local needs and therefore are best positioned to take responsive measures (Baviskar 2004); however, this then imply's that authorities have in depth

knowledge of their citizens and are held accountable for their actions (Manor 1999). Decentralization discourse centres on ideas of democracy, pluralism, and rights, and a number of researchers (for example Wollenburg *et al.* 2001; Anderson *et al.* 1998; Meinzen-Dick & Pradhan 2000) pointed out that natural resource management is moving toward a democratic and rights based premise.⁴¹ While a combination of factors and forces shape decentralisation, a body of academic research argues that such reforms are driven by a development-oriented agenda (Agrawal 2001; Wollenburg *et al.* 2001). Support for decentralization is rooted in the belief that it has the potential to lead to efficient and equitable institutions; which then provides for an environment in which sustainable management and development is possible (Manor 1999; Crook & Manor 1998; Uphoff & Esman 1974). Research highlights a number of other interests in decentralization, for example: political advantages, arguing that it has a vital role in democratisation and makes space for peoples active participation (Crook & Manor 1998; Ribot 1996; Rothschild 1994); rural development (Uphoff & Esman 1974; Ribot 2002); public service performance (World Bank 2000:107); poverty alleviation (Crook & Sverrisson 2001:iii); relief of fiscal crisis (Meinzen-Dick & Knox 1999:5); political and macroeconomic stability (World Bank 2000:107); national unity and state building (Conyers 2000; Mamdani 1996; Bazaara 2002:203); and its role in increasing the legitimacy of government (Ribot 2002).

Policy makers and practitioners in India have shown considerable interest in decentralised management and governance (Kolavalli 1995; Kolavalli & Kerr 2002; Johnson *et al.* 2003 provide an in-depth discussion of decentralization with respect to *panchayats*). In terms of management of degraded forest areas, legal and administrative provisions have supported the formation of new participatory institutions since the 1990s (Sundar 2001). Regardless of the increasing interest and commitment to decentralization and participatory processes, a contradiction has been created in some contexts – where centralised strategies are utilised to demonstrate the success of decentralization (Agrawal & Ribot 1999, Baviskar 2004).

In Tirthan valley two processes of decentralized forest management were being rolled out by the Forest Department. The first process involved the creation of forest user committees labelled Village Forest Development Committees (VFDCs); and the

second was the process of transferring responsibility for issuing medicinal plant export permits from Forest Departments to *panchayats*.⁴² Both processes were motivated by the post-1990 mandate for Joint Forest Management (JFM). Success of JFM is dependent on the formation of village institutions that undertake protection activities on state-owned forestland. In return, members of these committees are entitled to intermediary benefits like NTFPs, and to a share of the timber harvest, both of which are believed to be plentiful when protection and management measures in place are successfully implemented (Sundar 2000).

In this chapter I explore how decentralisation took shape in Tirthan valley. I argue that the need to demonstrate that concrete results were achieved, and the government's interest in maintaining ultimate control, minimised the potential of decentralized forest management, and ultimately little power is relinquished by the government (also see Baviskar 2004). I show that funding requirements have also contributed to undermining the processes they advocate and support (Baviskar 2004). The end result of this is that the alleged desired outcomes for ecological restoration and social justice are not realized (Baviskar 2004, also see Mosse 2001; Hirschmann 2003; Vivian & Maseko 1994). However, it is not productive to simply dismiss decentralised management as ultimately a top-down, donor-driven process (Baviskar 2004). In this chapter I reveal that to understand how decentralization takes shape it is necessary to understand the existing political networks and exchanges between the state and local populations. It is village people's active collaboration that ultimately determines the success or failure of the process.

Having considered objectives for colonial forestry in the previous chapter, I provide an account of contemporary conditions for forest management. I do this to develop an understanding of what drives priorities for forest management. To provide a framework in which to place my observations and interpretations, I begin this chapter with definitions and justifications for decentralization. In the following sections I provide an analysis of the space that exists between policy objectives and practice, the contradiction between the participatory objectives of decentralisation, and the objectives of donor-government programs (also see Sivaramakrishnan 2000).

⁴² *Panchayats* are systems of rural government, and elected local council.

3.1 Defining Decentralization

A number of academics argue that local participation in decision-making can create a sense of ownership and accountability that is instrumental in long-term sustainable management of resources (see Ostrom 1990; Hirschman 2003). This sense of ownership results in a motivated and engaged society that is invested in implementing, monitoring and enforcing rules. Decentralization has the potential to result in inclusive decision making which would then allow marginalised groups to have a greater role in influencing and shaping local policy objectives (Carney 1995; Ostrom 1990; Margulis 1999; Kaimowitz *et al.* 1998). Essentially, through decentralisation the aim is to achieve a central goal of political governance – democratization, or the desire that people have a say in decisions that fundamentally impact their way of life (Agrawal 1999).⁴³ Nevertheless, case studies that look at decentralization reforms insist that the institutional arrangements required for the desired outcomes rarely exist (Agrawal 2001; Agrawal & Ribot 1999; Ribot 2002, 2003, 2004, Baviskar 2004).

Decentralization requires that responsibility and, in essence, power is transferred from central to local authorities – both administratively and politically (Ribot 2003). Administrative decentralisation of public services⁴⁴ makes room for line ministries, such as health, education, public works and environment, and allows them to better understand the local population's priorities, which in turn better equips them to provide relevant services and support (Ribot 2003). The primary basis for political decentralization is that new local institutions are representative of, and accountable to; local populations (Baviskar 2004, Kauneckis & Andersson; 2006), and they have a secure and independent sphere of authority to make and implement meaningful decisions (Ribot 2002). Nevertheless, central governments rarely relinquish control over the provision of rewarding opportunities, even when central knowledge and experience is unnecessary (Fairhead & Leach 1996 Baviskar 2004). To distinguish key terms in the decentralization debate I refer to Mosse's analysis in the *Rule of Water*:

The devolution of rights and responsibilities in resource management to local user groups, is one of several converging policy trends, including: the '*deconcentration*' of decision making

⁴³ Other authors have discussed the relationship between decentralization and democracy (Nzouankeu 1994)

⁴⁴ Transfers of power to local administrative bodies.

from higher to lower levels within bureaucracy; the '*decentralization*' of decision making authority and payment of responsibility to lower levels and the introduction of new forms of downward accountability; the *privatisation* of ownership from public to private sectors, and the *participation* of citizens in state programmes through greater *democratisation* of their processes (Meinzen-Dick & Knox 1999; Raju et al. 2000; Agrawal & Ribot 2000) (2003:265).

The actor, powers and accountability framework discussed in Agrawal and Ribot (1999) lends itself well to analysing the type and extent of decentralisation in a specific country. Comparing decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa, Agrawal and Ribot's (1999) study brings forward the distinct differences between upward and downward accountability. They conclude that the ability to hold decision-makers accountable depends to a great extent on the relationship between local officials, their superiors, and local citizens. Kaunekis and Andresson (2006) move forward with this argument and explain that accountability in terms of decentralization requires that authority, and resources that fall under the authority's domain, are in fact passed on to actors at lower-levels so that they can decide whether an independent domain of decision making is present for issues of local significance. Using experiences and observations from Tirthan valley this chapter concludes that the extent of decentralization is not the only relevant factor in understanding how local actors will utilise their authority, and what outcomes this will have for local people and resources. The way, in which decentralization is implemented, in addition to the economic context associated with a particular natural resource, also affects the kinds of choices that are made by local decision makers.

3.2 Decentralizing Forestry

.In India, as explained in Chapter 2, historically management of forested lands was to a large extent centralized and in the hands of the state. Local populations ability to influence forestry through formal channels, such as institutions, advocacy groups, and donor agencies has been limited. However local groups have been able to exert a significant amount of informal influence. Local groups frequently utilize their own principles, rules and practices and decide which state laws to implement and which to ignore. These types of situations may allow local groups to influence their immediate environment, however it does little to improve their ability to interact within a larger political arena (Wollenburg *et al.* 2006).

In terms of forestry in India, decentralization presents itself in two distinct forms, either as centrally driven community forest programmes or as local governance (Wollenburg *et al*, 2006). In state driven forestry community forest programmes formal rights are granted to community forest user groups so that forestry can be carried out jointly (Wollenburg *et al*, 2006). State agencies hand over some aspects of forestry to local community forest groups, in the case of Tirthan valley the Forest Department was to work with Village Forest Development Committees (VFDCs). In India this type of decentralized forest management was termed Joint Forest Management. The second type of decentralization seen in forestry place's an emphasis on local governance. In this case formal control is transferred from the government agencies to local governments who in turn become responsible for administration and decision-making. The powers held formerly by state departments are now transferred to local governments - this includes allocation of funds from taxes, fees, and royalties resulting from local transactions (the transfer of medicinal plant permitted, discussed later in this chapter, would be an example of this type of decentralization) (Wollenburg *et al*, 2006). It is important to note that the extent to which transfer of financial, administrative and power occurs varies from region to region. In general forest management has yet to be wholly the responsibility of local government bodies (Baviskar 2004, Ribot and Larson, 2005). This type of decentralization usually occurs just above the community level, at the *panchayat* level.

In spite of the fact that both state mandated forestry programmes and local governance are rooted in the desire for decentralization, the outcomes and resulting impacts on local populations can vary significantly (Wollenburg *et al*, 2006). JFM allows for ultimate control over decisions and distribution of benefits to remain in the hands of state agencies, and are only for the forest sector (Sarin *et al*. 2003). Decentralization that places an emphasis on local governance works to open space for forest users to move into a wider array of politics with which to influence the state, and in turn new spaces are created for social organization and political engagement (Shue 1994, Wollenburg *et al*, 2006).

Wollenburg and her colleagues (2006) note that decentralizing governance has the potential to create a number of opportunities and challenges for local populations living on or near forested lands. With the formation of local governments the state becomes more visible at the local level, which can limit community's ability to function semi-autonomously (Wollenberg *et al*. 2006). For local populations to continue to

influence forest management they must continue and increase engagement with the state. However engagement can also have a down side, local elites can align their interests with state agencies for their own personal gains.

Decentralization can also make room for local groups to come to the forefront and increase their range of influence. While decentralization can place limits on a community group's ability to organize political initiatives at a grand scale, it increases potential for local groups to organize (Wollenberg *et al.* 2006). Local governments are keen to organize so that they are better able to mobilize people and resources and thereby increasing their influence. Local channels to engage become increasingly important in this type of scenario. In terms of forested lands, economic and social development takes priority over national concerns for biological diversity (Wollenberg *et al.* 2006).

However decentralization can create tensions between local government's intermediate position between state agencies and local populations. Policies handed down from state agencies can conflict with local government interests and priorities. Strengthening local institutions can jeopardize state agencies control over processes and management (Wollenburg *et al.*, 2006; Wollenburg *et al.*, 2009). However state agencies and local institutions continue to be interdependent – both have resources the other wants. Forest Departments are not keen to give up income from valuable forest products while local entities require markets, skills and capital available from the centre (Manor 1999, Ribot and Agrawal 1999).

Wollenberg *et al.* (2009) note that these conditions, when combined, can make way for specific opportunities for local populations dependent on forested lands to influence the state in ways that bring together informal and formal outlets. These outlets increase opportunities for,

“direct engagement, personal relationships, traditional or customary authorities, and new local political organizations, as well as formal mechanisms such as voting or participating in public hearings. Local political orders make the classic branching hierarchy of Weberian governance of forest areas obsolete. Control is not absolute, nor is the monopoly of the state. No one element of the state or society can dominate. Instead, governance is multi-polar, multileveled and characterized by multiple struggles. (Wolleberg et al. 2009:7).

Local populations are better able to share power with state agencies through decentralization, however ambiguity in power also leaves them vulnerable. The

following sections show that ambiguities and uncertainties' are very much an aspect of decentralization of forestry in Tirthan valley.

3.3 Contemporary Conditions of Forestry

Since the 1980s, forest management models in India have stressed the importance of local people's participation in the sustainable management of forest resources. Projects and programmes all over India have been developed with the objective of involving local people in managing forests (see Poffenberger *et al.* 1996; Sundar & Jeffery, 1999; Sundar *et al.* 2001; Bala *et al.* 2003; Roy 1995). Surprisingly the 1988 Indian National Forest Policy also supports this view; the National Forest Policy envisages people's participation in the development and protection of forests and also treats forests as an ecological resource that provides vital subsistence needs for the poor (Prasad & Kant 2002; Bala *et al.* 2003). The JFM initiative is a prevalent paradigm for forest management all over India (Sudha *et al.* 2006). Nevertheless, even with the awareness that local participation is instrumental to effective forest management, local populations continue to be excluded from forest management in many regions of India and their access to forest resources are often severely constrained (Sundar & Jeffery 1999; Saxena 2000).

National JFM programmes were initiated through a central government instruction that encouraged state governments to involve village communities in forest protection and management by creating VFDCs (Poffenberger *et al.* 1996, Kumar 2005, Saxena 2000). These forest protection committees were formed with assistance from the Forest Department and local NGOs. One of Himachal Pradesh's Chief CF explained that the aim of this initiative was to have VFDCs and Forest Departments jointly manage degraded state forests. He went on to elaborate that once the committees were formed they would enter into an agreement with their local Forest Department branch to jointly manage a particular patch of (state-owned) forest land, and in return the VFDC would be entitled to a share of benefits –intermediate benefits like grasses, medicinal plants, and other NTFPs, in addition to timber harvest. Forest Department officials felt that this policy would reverse the process of deforestation, protect biodiversity, meet local subsistence needs, and contribute to sustainable development in forest areas. Sundar's 2001 study examined the number of ways JFM could be characterized, exploring key events that lead to JFM while also outlining

different components of JFM. In her study Sundar explains that village committees often contain competing visions of future paths, with those who want cash returns preferring different management strategies from those who want to protect grazing or firewood collection.

In 2001 the Forest Department in Himachal Pradesh began a pilot project in Kullu and Mandi Districts (see Appendix A for a Map of districts in Himachal Pradesh) which resulted in 155 VFDCs. Generally the VFDC included members from all households in a *kothi*⁴⁵ who have documented existing rights to a particular forest. An executive body was elected from the general membership; this executive team was responsible for managing the forest area allotted to them and distributing benefits. A Forest Department official explained that forest guards were to take on the role of VFDC secretary in their jurisdictions, and their primary responsibility was managing financial records. In the sections that follow I examine decentralized forest management in Tirthan valley through village people's experiences with VFDCs and the medicinal plant permit processes. I do this to show the disjuncture that exists between what decentralization is believed to accomplish, presented at the outset of this chapter, and how it is actually played out in village people's everyday lives.

3.4 The Mission: Managing forests and revamping forest policy

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution formally recognized a third tier of government at the sub- state level, thereby creating the legal conditions for the *panchayati raj*, rural representative bodies (for detailed analysis and discussion of *panchayat* system in India see Johnson 2003; Johnson *et al.* 2003; also see Agrawal 1999; Misra 2000; Chauhan *et al.* 2002). In rural areas village *panchayat* activities are monitored by the *gram shabha*, the general body of villagers⁴⁶ (Misra 2000). Theoretically the *gram shabha* holds power to approve the *panchayat's* plans regarding local forest resources (Chauhan *et al.* 2002; Ballabh 2002). While this appears to be a significant move towards democratic decentralization, a closer look at the provisions outlined in the Amendment reveals that where responsibilities and accountability lie is unclear. For example no financial powers are allocated to the

⁴⁵ A *kothi* consists of several villages.

⁴⁶ A body, which is made up of all adult members in the village, and the quorum (1/3 of the village population), must be present for the minutes of the *gram shabha* to be passed.

gram shabhas; Forest Departments continue to have primary authority over forests and make final decisions regarding forest use and access; the *gram shabha* does not have the power to halt land acquisition by the government if they feel it is detrimental to their livelihoods (Misra 2000, Chauhan *et al.* 2002; Ballabh *et al.* 2002). Thus, what was presented as a profound transformation in management, by which *panchayats* were to have a significant role in managing resources, and held accountable by populations they represent, was in fact quite limited because powers and procedures for the *gram shabha* were not clearly laid out nor did their role increase in scope. What was different was that many forested areas under the *panchayat* now come under the regulations associated with JFM. Thus local initiatives that were previously relatively autonomous of the Forest Department were now being monitored and managed by the Forest Department (Agrawal 2001; Ballabh *et al.* 2002; Sarin *et al.* 2003).

Formal political decentralization in Himachal Pradesh has been in place since 1993, when the Government of India passed a series of constitutional reforms that were intended to empower and democratize India's rural landscapes. The number of market opportunities that have since opened up and become available to rural people has prompted the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department to take steps to revise the current forest policy. The Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Reform Project (HPFSR) was established to assess new pressures and interests in forestry and to update policy so that it reflected rural people's current priorities and requirements for forests. HPFSR was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DfID), with institutional support and cooperation from the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. Donor agencies, government agencies and the HPFSR team all emphasised the need to ensure that local involvement and interests in medicinal plant trade and ecotourism were incorporated in the revised policy.

Forest Department officials and HPFSR project staff were convinced that VFDCs were the vehicle with which to achieve goals for decentralised forest management in the region, as opposed to *panchayats*. The result being that forest management in Kullu District became a mix of traditional, colonial, and post-independence ideologies. Official village councils governed some forests, some were under the control of the Forest Department, and others came under the jurisdiction of the GHNP (Appendix D) (the GHNP is discussed in detail in Chapter 6). The assortment of rules and regimes resulted in a fractured and hybrid political landscape

that resulted in legal pluralism (Merry 1988; Sibley & Sarat 1987; Kidder 1979).

In terms of incorporating medicinal plants into forest policy, while I was in Himachal Pradesh there was great debate over which government agency was the steward of this particular forest product. Did responsibilities fall within the realm of the Forest Department or the Ayurveda Department, which was housed within the Ministry of Health? I spoke with a CF, who was seconded to the Foundation for the Revitalization of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) about on-going tensions between the two Departments. In his opinion:

“The Forest Department feels that the management of the resource has to lie with the Forest Department, however at the national level (Government of India), the medicinal plant sector is considered to be a section of health care and therefore has been mandated under the Ministry of Health. In addition to these two departments having extreme stakes, one related to conservation and the other to the use of the resource - there are many other stakeholders attached to this sector, including the primary gatherer, folk healer and the local trader. There is little dialogue amongst these various stakeholders, who often have conflicting interests for the resource. No improvement in this sector is, therefore, possible without developing effective inter-sectoral linkages and common strategy”.

As mentioned earlier in this section, a priority for the HPFSR project was to explicitly incorporate medicinal plants and other NTFPs into forest policy. However, simultaneously an informal medicinal plant policy was being drafted by the Forest Department in Shimla.⁴⁷ I asked HPFSR staff if they had been notified or asked to participate in the process. An advisor for the HPFSR, and also a forest officer, expressed her frustrations to me:

“We found out about it almost accidentally, no one in the Forest Department thought to inform us about it [the medicinal plant policy]. I cannot understand how such an oversight could have been made. We have been working very closely with the Forest Department to draft the forest sector reform policy, and medicinal plants have been one of the key issues discussed. It is problematic because you have two groups carrying out similar projects. After I found out about this medicinal plant sector policy I looked it over to see if the draft raised points

⁴⁷ What I found ironic about this consultation was that participants were not from the various other sectors that G.S Gorya had highlighted in this interview with me - healers, collectors, local traders, NGOs and institutions concerned with health or healing. All participants represented concerns for conservation and management of forests. I highlight this as an example of how theoretically we are often aware of what is necessary, however in practice it is difficult to let go of your conscious and subconscious bias.

different from what we highlighted. The Medicinal Plant Sector Policy is speaking to the same issues as we are and has given similar, if not, the same recommendations as we have.”

This illustrates some of the confusion that ensues when a number of institutions have a stake in one particular resource or topic. Too many institutions, or too many levels of actors, can diffuse authority making all actors ineffective and undermining their legitimacy to act in the public arena (see Sinha *et al.* 2003). It also brings into question whether competition among institutions actually creates greater efficiency in serving public interests (see Tandler’s study of governance and government performance in Brazil, 1997).

3.5 Decentralizing Forest Management: The Making of VFDCs

As mentioned above, the HPFSR project team and the Forest Department were convinced that passing forest management responsibilities to VFDCs was the most efficient route to decentralization. The Forest Department and HPFSR project staff felt that VFDCs would be effective in explicitly emphasizing the focus on participatory forestry. There was a mutual feeling among Forest Department officials, and many village men and women I spoke with, that *panchayats* did not encourage participation and were "too political". The prevailing feeling was that political party affiliations were undermining the welfare of the village as a whole. However there was danger that VFDCs could overlook the complexities of village life by creating conditions for membership that dovetail with goals for local development as opposed to aspirations of individuals or groups within the local population. As I will show in later sections of this chapter, activities around forest management were determined by a particular set of beliefs, which then needed to be represented in terms of decentralization (see Mosse 2005:57-183).

A critical objective for VFDC members was to prepare micro-plans for forest management in their jurisdiction. A micro-plan was described to me by an HPFSR team member as the following:

“A survey to assess difficulties that local villagers face in managing forests, and their requirements from forests, and to then determine specific solutions. All segments of the community should be encouraged to participate, particularly the marginalized villagers. We intend to utilize PRA exercises for data collection”.

VFDC members were given participatory rural appraisal (PRA) training by Forest Department staff and were then sent on their way to collect the data required to complete the micro-plan. HPFSR project staff and the Forest Department decided the structure of the micro-plan and the type of data and information to be collected. This then makes one question how useful micro-plans are for local villagers. Sundar explains that micro-plans ‘...follow the same silvi-cultural prescriptions [as work plans, which have been utilized by the Forest Department in India for centuries] and no attempt is made to integrate villagers’ needs or knowledge into the technical management...’ (2000:271). The Forest Department and HPFSR project staff assumed that village people would be more willing to discuss their use, needs, priorities and requirements for forest resources with other village people like themselves instead of park authorities. However, this was optimistic; both Forest Department officials and VFDC committee members told me that micro-plans were unsuccessful in gathering information or gaining people’s trust. When I asked Premlata Devi, female member of a local VFDC, why she felt micro-plans were unsuccessful she replied, “The people are not with us, they are aware that this activity was initiated by the Forest Department; they think it is a ploy to take more resources away from them.”⁴⁸ Although the VFDCs were considered to be “less political” in comparison to the *panchayats*, VFDC represented a different agenda, one with which the *panchayat* was not associated – conservation and the GHNP. Perhaps then *panchayats* would have been a more effective in achieving results because they were not directly associated with the GHNP. I was keen to learn more about the micro-plan process because it revealed a great deal about Forest Department relations with local populations, local population’s concerns, and how policy objectives unfold on the ground at the village level. I asked Govind, who was responsible for facilitating the VFDC micro-plans in Tirthan valley, what his thoughts were on the micro planning process: Did he have apprehensions or concerns? What challenges was he experiencing in facilitating the micro planning exercise?

“The Forest Department and HPFSR project staff tells us that the information we collected is not what they wanted. Villagers carrying out the micro plans were not able to obtain the

⁴⁸ People’s fears are based on prior experiences with the Forest Department and forest use surveys. Prior to the creation of Great Himalayan National Park a similar survey was carried out to determine park boundaries.

required data. They documented how many water pumps the villages have, how many temples, how many schools – this was not the purpose. Now I have to make sense of this and see if I can somehow fit it [manipulate it] so it will meet their [HPFSR and Forest Departments] requirements.”⁴⁹

On paper VFDC members were given the power to create and implement rules with respect to common forest resources at the village level, make decisions about resource use, devise context-specific plans and ensure compliance. They were separated from the *gram shaba* and *panchayats*. The *gram shaba* monitored activities and decisions taken by the *panachayats*, however it was decided that the *gram shaba* would not have this role with respect to VFDCs, this measure was taken in order create “less political” VFDCs. The fatal flaw in this reorganization of local forest management was that it limited downward accountability. The move towards decentralization was constricted considerably because all plans and activities related to the VFDCs were to be sanctioned by the Forest Department. Thus in this instance forest management through VFDCs introduced politics of the state, and made room for bureaucracy to take control of the entire process. This also enabled collaboration between government officials and individuals and social groups (Ferguson, 1990).⁵⁰

Manor (2004) emphasizes that the formation of single purpose user committees like VFDCs can have a negative impact on elected multi-purpose bodies, such as *panchayats*. At one of the monthly Guruda *panchayat* meetings I asked the village people in attendance what they knew about the VFDCs. Many said that they felt “confused about the role of the VFDC”. This occurred in part because the VFDCs function at a different level from the *panchayat* – the latter covered a cluster of villages over a larger area, while the former were established at the ward level – comprised of between three to five villages and hamlets. Also, it seems that there was an overlap in responsibilities. Traditionally the *panchayat* worked with the forest guard to address any issues related to local forest management, now that VFDCs were being established throughout the valley it was unclear how responsibilities would be

⁴⁹ Manipulated participation is not the only reason to question the VFDCs ability to achieve goals for decentralization. As far as I am aware, most of the VFDCs in Tirthan valley were never actually functional. The Superintendent District Magistrate (SDM) had registered numerous VFDCs; however, when I visited villages throughout the valley to inquire about the VFDCs, only two out of the eight listed were actually created, but were not functioning. The forest guards, as per instructions handed down by senior level GHNP staff, collected the number of names required for a VFDC and then submitted the list to the SDM so that they could be officially registered.

⁵⁰ Examples of collaboration and corruption will be illustrated in the discussion below in the context of decentralization and medicinal plants, and in the following section on participation.

assigned. Would all forest management related activities and decisions be passed on to the VFDCs? Medicinal plants permits (for export) were to be administered by the *panchayat* (discussed below). However, if all issues pertaining to forest management were to be addressed by the VFDC, then would they also be responsible for the medicinal plant export permits? I asked these questions to village people active within their *panchayats* and to the *panchayat* head, but they were uncertain about how VFDCs would function alongside *panchayats*, if at all. Officials within the Forest Department were also unable clarify and elaborate on how VFDCs would coexist with *panchayats*.

Manor (2004) suggests that having VFDCs assume the *panchayat*'s responsibilities can work to damage existing relations, systems and processes in place for local development. The revenue that the *panchayats* collect⁵¹ from granting medicinal plant export permits, and which would be put towards village development, would now belong to the VFDCs. It was not clear how this revenue would be accounted for and how it would be used. Participatory Research in Asia's (PRIA) (2001) study examined a similar experience in Gujarat, where JFM user committees had deprived village councils of stewardship over forest products, and of the income from the sale of forest products, undermining the village council's legitimacy with their constituency. Manor's (2004) study asks why governments would move forward with creating local councils only to disempower them by promoting user committees. Relying on field research carried out in South Asia and Southern and Central Africa, Manor (2004) concludes, first, that some senior level politicians do not actually want to give up their power and resources to decentralised bodies, and second, that lower level bureaucrats are keen to wear down the power of elected members of *panchayats* or multi-purpose councils because they feel that these members do not have skills necessary to manage responsibilities that come with decentralisation.

Do Manor's (2004) observations hold true for Tirthan Valley? After numerous interviews and conversations with senior level Forest Department officials and GHNP officials, I felt most had a sincere desire to support goals for decentralization; however, they were uncertain how to go about it so that interests of government

⁵¹Forest Department officials told me that one of the reasons to hand over the permit process to the *panchayats* was so that they could collect the revenues and use it for development purposes. It was believed that if the *panchayat* is able to generate some of its own funds it might increase its credibility among village people.

departments, village people, and the donor agencies were addressed and maintained.⁵² Decentralisation of medicinal plant permits and the creation of VFDCs were relatively new initiatives in the valley. The VFDCs were just being established when I was carrying out this field work, and although the Notification (see Appendix E) to decentralize medicinal plants was sent out in 2001, Forest Departments were still grappling with it and they felt that thus far it was ineffective in raising revenue for the *panchayats* (see the discussion below for details). Regardless, Forest Department officials worked diligently to accommodate HPFSR project's objective for user committees. Their commitment to facilitating the creation of user committees was in part due to the fact that HPFSR was an externally sponsored project (DfID being the project sponsor) that had generated a great deal of support from senior ranking government officials at the state and national level, and because of the prestige that comes from association with foreign agencies.

Through conversations with Mr Nath,⁵³ who was involved with the HPFSR project until 2005, it was clear to me that he and the GHNP Director disagreed on which institution was best equipped to support decentralization. Mr Nath recommended that the Forest Department and the HPFSR project teamwork directly with the *panchayats*.⁵⁴ However, the GHNP Director argued that the *panchayats* did not have the capacity to facilitate decentralization, and wanted to see more active involvement from VFDCs. His preference for the VFDCs involvement came from his well-meaning desire to control the decentralization process so that he could be certain that it was a success: "I want to ensure that it happens". It could be assumed that the GHNP Director was keen to ensure decentralization happened in the way he had envisioned; taking into account what he considered was in the best interest of all stakeholder groups. Having the project teamwork directly with VFDCs allowed him to better monitor and influence the process. Why did donor agencies choose to work with user committees instead of working with existing institutions? According to Manor:

⁵² This being said, I do feel that forest guards and other lower level bureaucrats may find user committees to be a threat to their autonomy; this is highlighted in the following section of this chapter.

⁵³ Mr Nath was a consultant for the HPFSR project.

⁵⁴ Mr Nath was in a difficult position because the project he was on (HPFSR) was advocating user committees, as was the department. He was butting heads with his "people" and their partners, the Forest Department and GHNP. I highlight this to illustrate the debates and struggle between individuals working within donor agencies on the effectiveness of user committees.

Donors favour single-purpose committees because they give the appearance of local consultation while freeing the donor's project from micro-management by government agencies. Donor eagerness for user committees arises in part because they enable donors to remove themselves from the job of micromanaging development initiatives (2004:194).

User committees are often have access to financial resources, have identified goals that exceed their ability, and goals with timeframes that are unrealistic, while general-purpose local councils are underfunded (Manor 2004). Over-funding of user groups can undermine the legitimacy of other local authorities. When I asked a HPFSR project member, who is also a CF for the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department why she felt the project chose to work through forest societies her reply was:

“By working through the VFDC we expect the projects to be much more sustainable; people will feel more inclined to maintain and possibly contribute funds, time and labour to projects which they have had some say in. Also each VFDC can determine and address issues that are specific to them and their forest use”.

Many governments lack institutional frameworks that have the capacity, and reach, to consult with local populations about policy process and implementation (Conyers 2002; Cousins & Kepe 2002; Namara & Nsabagasani 2003). User committees that give local residents significant room to participate in decision-making processes have the potential to provide the necessary frameworks (Conyers 2002; Namara & Nsabagasani 2003, Baviskar 2004) for decentralization. These user committees can also play a productive role in political systems that are top-down (see for example Crook & Manor 1998, Baviskar 2004). Johnson's (*et al.* 2003) comparative study of Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh provides an example of how *panchayats* fail where user committees can succeed. VFDCs have the potential to open up new avenues for local populations to access services⁵⁵. This brings me to Uphoff's (1993:619) long-standing belief that public policies can and do benefit from the strength of NGO relationships with the state and market institutions. These NGO

⁵⁵ Currently I am working on a social impact assessment in the DRC. We have facilitated the formation of Consultation Committees to liaise directly with the mine. The Committees were formed after a period of stakeholder identification and analysis to ensure that the committees were representative of all groups that exist in the impacted communities. These committees were formed around mining in the same way that VFDCs were formed around forestry, to ensure that local people had a vehicle to consult with the mining company, and the mining company had a committee that they could go to about mine related matters.

relationships have the potential to revive and expand collective action. He argues that local residents should have multiple routes through which to engage with governments. In the following section I examine the processes of forming VFDCs and show that access to decision making processes, services, benefits and the state in many instances were linked to one's socio-economic position. Access to local institutions is not equally available to all local village people. The question that guides the following discussion is: Who in the village benefits from new spaces that are created through VFDCs and how?

3.5.1 Forming VFDCs

In the previous section I drew attention to the rationale for decentralizing forest management through VFDCs as opposed to *panchayats*. I showed that decentralization in Tirthan valley was taking a centralized approach by explaining that goals, objectives and activities were defined by the Forest Department and the HPFSR project team, and then passed down to the VFDCs. Here I examine how VFDCs in Tirthan valley were formed, to understand whose participation was elicited and why?

Forest guards were given the responsibility of creating VFDCs in each Ward.⁵⁶ They were instructed that the VFDCs must have members who represented the variety of socio-economic and stakeholder groups (caste, gender, economic status, education) present in Tirthan valley⁵⁷. The idea of creating VFDCs was not one that sat well with most forest guards in Tirthan valley because these very same guards were also tasked with restricting the general public from entering forests to collect fuel and fodder. A forest guard's role and responsibilities often resulted in tensions between themselves and local residents (Baviskar 2004). For many guards, to now bring people together to discuss forest management and stewardship was a daunting prospect to say the least. I asked Tek Ram, a forest guard for Guruda *Panchayat*, about his experiences with the VFDC:

"I ask people that have power in the ward to join. I do this out of respect and also because it would be impossible to form a committee without their blessing. My relationship with the committee is good. I do not involve myself too much in the committee now that it is formed. I am present because it is my duty, but it is their committee. I feel it is not appropriate to meddle

⁵⁶ Each village or hamlet in a *panchayat* is divided into Wards; each *panchayat* has 5-7 Wards.

⁵⁷ Note that this did not include migrant medicinal plant collectors or migrant labourers.

too much in their affairs. My relationship with the Committee head is good; we respect each other's position.”⁵⁸

On a previous occasion Tek Ram spoke to me about concerns he had for his safety and wellbeing. He explained the need to not speak too much, “after all how can I win against a whole group of villagers. It is best to remain on people’s good side”. I asked Kunal Singh about the need to include village elite in VFDCs. Kunal, a *Rajput* farmer, is considered to be “elite” by other village men and women. Kunal felt that:

“These [forest] guards must include people like me in those [VFDC] committees; people do not really listen to the guards. It is us [people like him; high-caste, wealthy, and with a relative who has a government job] who locals will listen to, not him. He is a guard, yes, but he does not have the same influence in the valley as I do.”

I asked Kunal, “Why do you think you are considered to be an influential person by villagers living in this valley?”:

“My caste, my family's history, my father was a big man here. We have a lot of property; we have a big home, a shop, and many cash crops. My cousin does service [works for the government]. The guards come from poor families. It is just that they work for the government that they have some title to say and to show. But in actuality it is not much.”

HPFSR project team explained that the criteria used by them and Forest Department officials to determine a “well-functioning” VFDC included the ability to interact with Forest Department and GHNP staff, regular attendance at meetings, representation of all classes, and involvement of poor and deprived sections of society. Some of these criteria were contradictory; however, Forest Department’s did not have the resources or capacity to address them adequately. For instance, a good VFDC included women and low-caste village people; however, conversations with Tek Ram indicated that if forest guards want to achieve what is required of them they must approach the village elite (Baviskar 2004). The ease with which one can work within existing hierarchical

⁵⁸ I found it difficult to get the forest guards to speak openly about their relationship with committee or *panchayat* heads. The forest guards in Tirthan Valley are all lower-caste villagers. I feel that perhaps it is a blow to their sense of self-esteem to speak about the discrimination they face from the villagers, a title that you would think would also come with a high standing in the village. I say this knowing that in other instances the title of guard has afforded these same people liberties they would otherwise not be privy to. I observed that forest guards were often quiet and agreeable, and spoke with their heads bowed in presence of village heads.

structures and boundaries is hidden by the emphasis on the need to respect traditional culture and thereby ensuring that village elite were involved (Baviskar 2004). Thus forest guards were able to show that they achieved one particular item on the checklist of a good VFDC – that it must respect local customs and religious beliefs (Baviskar 2004). With tight time frames and impatient senior staff driven to achieve targets, it was “less complicated and much faster” for forest guards to work directly with village heads and other village elite, as Mosse (2005) explains:

Development interventions, even those with explicit agendas of participation, community driven development, or empowerment, tend to affirm power structures; they tend to be inherently conservative, reconstituting rather than challenging relations of power, authority, and patronage at every level (2005:226).

To what extent do these user committees influence village people’s everyday lives? According to Manor (1999) some have a restricted role limited to selecting beneficiaries for projects and others have absolutely no power. Cornwall and Gaventa (2001) argue that when user committees are explicitly given powers to influence the implementation of policies, the formal ‘remit of these committees generally remains confined to ensuring the efficiency of delivery, rather than to give citizens more of a voice in determining the kinds of services they want or need’ (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:10-11). Manor’s (2004) conversations with decentralization specialists in Africa and India led him to the conclusion that it common for user committees to not have any involvement in programme design, and rarely did they have the authority to modify the implementation of projects so that they integrated unique local conditions (also see Bjorn (2006) research on user committees in South Africa, and Uprety’s (2006) discussion of community forest user groups in Nepal). I asked Govind and Premlata Devi whether they felt user committees would impact their day-to-day lives:

Govind: “It is difficult to say; right now the committee just seems like another government sponsored committee. It will probably work the way the forest people [forest department] decide they want it to work. The idea for the committees was theirs, so they will tell us how to run them as well. They are giving village people a job and training that is benefiting some villagers; it is supposed to address our forest management issues, but we will have to see if it actually does anything.

Premlata Devi: “Right now I do not see a direct benefit from this. I did receive training, and I

enjoy the trainings. I was able to meet people, but I cannot think of any real benefits for right now. Maybe later they will come.

Cornwall & Gaventa (2001: 11-12) emphasized that user committees are often ‘simple, cosmetic, and tokenistic’; ‘By denying people the agency to make choices outside the frame of reference afforded by their role in these programmes and by overlooking the complexity of relations of power between service providers and community members... they operate with a very limited conception of “participation”’ (Cornwall & Gaventa 2001: 11-12). Forest guards, who in my experience were cautious when voicing their concerns, did mention the difficulties they have with the VFDC concept:

“The sahibs tell us to make VFDC and we must, but they do not understand how difficult it is for us to make them in the way they expect, to include all the villagers [to meet gender and socio-economic requirements for group members]. We often ask the village heads to assist us in developing committees, as people will listen to them. Our role as guards is changing from enforcing rules to facilitating groups, but we are not trained for this, and in all this we must be able to maintain some level of authority”.

One can then conclude that in such circumstances Tirthan valley forest guards saw a confident and assertive local population as a threat. This echoes Manor's (1999) proposal that low-level bureaucrats can, and have, attempted to restrict user committees' scope and influence so that they can continue to direct the development process.

While senior officials were well aware that they must create user committees in order to obtain donor funds, they were also aware that there were ways to manipulate these processes. In one of the many HPFSR project workshops, a senior level Forest Department official from Kullu was questioned about poverty levels in Himachal Pradesh and the extent of the local population's dependence on forest products to meet livelihoods. After a few attempts to develop a response that would strengthen his presentation, he finally answered that it is debatable whether the people of Himachal Pradesh are actually “poor and highly dependent on forests”. He explained that he used the term “poverty alleviation” because “the project's focus was on poverty alleviation and forestry; to obtain the funds, we need to use this particular vocabulary”.

The creation of user committees can fragment popular participation, making them inconsistent and ineffective (Mohanty 2000: 15). This was most certainly not what donor agencies intended when they advocated for user committees. In later stages of the micro-planning process it was realized that the VFDCs were essentially assuming responsibilities of the *panchayats*, and confusing local residents. Rather than investing time and resources to develop another local institution, running in parallel, it was decided that it would be more effective and a better use of resources to work with, and strengthen, existing local institutions. How much more effective is it to work with the *panchayats*? In the following section I look at the process of transferring the authority for medicinal plant export permitting from forest guards to the *panchayats*, and the dilemmas that arose when these well-meaning attempts to decentralize and transfer benefits to local institutions were implemented.

3.6 Decentralization and Medicinal Plants

Notification FFE-B-G (9)-9/94-II states that the Forest Department would no longer administer the medicinal plant export permit process; and that the *panchayat* was to grant permits to shopkeepers trading medicinal plants and collect all royalties (see Appendix F). Forest Department officials stressed that royalties from medicinal plant trade and permit fees should be distributed to the *panchayat*, for village development purposes, but “the paper work must be handled by forest officials”. Although ideologically this was a progressive step towards participatory forest management, in actuality it was not at all successful. Sundar (2001) examined devolution⁵⁹ of NTFPs in Madhya Pradesh; she highlights the corruption and coercion that comes into play when attempts are made to shift to a new system of governance. Sundar (2001) questions the notion that devolution is the cure-all to the problems of decentralization and governance. Instead she suggests that in India devolution has ‘often served merely to reduce costs and responsibilities for the state’ (Sundar 2001:2008). She argues that:

More rather than less direct government intervention – in the form of enforcing the rule of law, or providing a countervailing power to local elites, may in fact have more democratic consequences than formal devolution....what matters is not the degree but the nature of government intervention (2001:2008).

⁵⁹ World Bank (2000:16) understanding of decentralization is “formal devolution of power to local decision makers”.

I found it difficult to clearly decipher what was happening with respect to medicinal plant permits in Tirthan valley. The new procedure outlined in Notification FFE-B-G (9)-9/94-II increased confusion in an already “messy” process. I spoke with *panchayat* leaders in Tirthan valley and found that not one had collected royalties or granted permits. There is uncertainty within the *panchayat* as to how to steer shopkeepers and traders to them for permits.

I was surprised by the *panchayat*’s ambivalence towards medicinal plant permits. The royalties for the plants are significant (see Appendix F) and would provide them with much needed extra funds for village development, yet there seemed to be no interest in administering the permit process. To better understand what in fact was happening around medicinal plant permits I spoke to shopkeepers trading medicinal plants and found that they continued to seek permits from forest guards. I spoke with Kesav Baba, a well-known trader in Tirthan valley, about the permit process. Once his stock was ready for transport, he informed the forest guard. The stock was verified, the quantity and quality of species recorded, the royalties paid by the trader to the forest guard, and the permit was then granted. The *panchayat* was not involved in this process. On many occasions I asked Kesav Baba to inform me of the forest guard’s visit; I was interested to see the exchange of permits. I would go by Kesav Baba’s shop every few days in the hope of running into the forest guard but I always seemed to arrive just after he left. I had similar experiences with other shopkeepers. I was not once able to witness an exchange between trader and forest guard. I assume that there are aspects of this exchange that would be considered corrupt by formal authorities (i.e. bribes). The Divisional Forest Officer told me that Kesav Baba had on many occasions bribed forest guards. I asked local shopkeepers why they continue to request permits from the forest guard:

“The *panchayats* are a mess; they do not know how to give permits, what is involved. It is much simpler and quicker to work with the Forest Department”.

It was much more efficient and effective to continue with a relationship that was familiar and where requirements for transactions, formal (paper work) and informal (bribes), were understood and accepted by all involved. It can be argued that:

Governments and its employees are more inclined to sustain top-down approaches when the sectors in which they work yield significant financial resources to governments, government actors and/or powerful private interests; the forest sector is a prime example (Manor 2004:202).

Governments and government agents can potentially earn substantial revenues from taxes on logging or from the sale of forest products. In such cases governments and individuals are not keen to see development agendas curb their informal incomes; as a result, in these types of circumstances top-down approaches are more likely to persist. Village people and lower level bureaucrats response to a higher authority's efforts to decentralize the medicinal plant permit process was to renegotiate the limits of an imposed structure amongst themselves so that existing relations were maintained and personal interests protected from external agendas.

Wollenburg's (*et al.* 2006) study in Malinau, Indonesia showed how independence led to tensions within the state and resulted in forest exploitation that was most certainly not in the public's long-term interest. Almost everyone, including local government officials, used the transition to decentralized governance – and the ensuing period of flux and disorganization – to test how far they could push the limits of forest use and access. Local officials employed their networks and alliances, especially between companies and villages, to organize themselves to exploit forests. The move to decentralization created a space for district government and local populations to take hold of forests that were previously under central control and begin operating them semi-autonomously from the centre and the province.

Tran Thanh and Sikor (2006) examined the effects of devolution on property rights in two villages of Dak Lak, a province in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. In this case provincial authorities used a forestland allocation program to transfer forest rights to local populations. The authors provide a comparison of 'legal rights, actual rights, and forest use practices' in the two villages, and also examine the 'mechanisms' by which actual rights and practices changed in response to recently established legal rights. Their analysis shows that legal rights did not necessarily result in changes to actual rights and practices. 'Three years after devolution, actual rights remained the object of intense negotiations among local actors' (Thanh & Sikor 2006). Negotiations were impacted by economic values associated with specific rights, and were informed by local histories and cultural norms (Thanh & Sikor 2006).

Consequently decentralization has the potential to affect the distribution of actual powers by shifting actor's positions in existing relationships, enticing them to assert new rights and modify their forest use practices. Local actor's actual powers stem from their relations with state actors and other actors. This understanding of decentralization has important implications for policy, because facilitating actual powers requires much broader political, economic and cultural changes.

3.7 Understanding Decentralization

Local population's actions are informed in most instances by their own understanding and expectations of government initiatives, and through these actions they can successfully alter the original purpose of decentralization, in this case objectives for forest management via VFDCs and the medicinal plant permitting process. The HPFSR project allotted considerable funds to hire and train village people to lead PRA activities with VFDCs members, with the intention of developing micro-plans. VFDC Secretary, Ram Chand, was assigned to facilitate micro-planning for his VFDC. He was thrilled with his role in the micro-planning process, "it gives me an opportunity to earn money, but it is not like a daily wage labour job, it is working with the big sahibs", which I assumed allowed him to further cement his place within village hierarchy. His participation in the VFDC improved his family's already high economic and social status in the village. I asked him if all members were normally present for VFDC meetings and if there were efforts to ensure all opinions were taken into account when making decisions:

"Yes all are present and involved. If someone is not interested or does not attend meetings, VFDC members approach the person in question and tell him he must attend meetings. If he does not, we will black list him from all other village activities".

Ram Chand's methods to "encourage" participation allowed him to deliver results he believed would make the project staff happy, and enabled him to build his reputation and status within the Forest Department and with HPFSR project staff.

VFDCs, in theory, were also intended to provide marginalized people with avenues to engage with the government. A Forest Department Officer explained, "the VFDCs will insure that women, lower caste, and the economically worse-off have a voice in decision making". Premlata Devi was a charismatic and articulate *Harijan*

woman, and lived in a small hamlet in Tirthan valley with her family. She was often asked by the Forest Department to be a representative and voice for other *Harijan* women residing in the valley. Attending these training sessions and being affiliated with HPFSR project allowed her to improve her social standing in the valley, which in turn afforded her a degree of leverage in every day village affairs – such as getting a seat on the bus, being included in village discussions, and receiving friendlier service at local shops. I asked her, “Why do you enjoy these sessions?”:

“I feel they improve my standing in the village. I know that the high-caste will never accept low-caste people as leaders, but they have to at least accept us in front of the Forest Department and the GHNP. They training sessions give me some say in how things run, and it allows me to become known to people in the [Forest] Department. I know that the forest people [Department] are including me primarily because I fill their quota for low-caste and women, but that is fine with me if it gives me opportunities and some power”.

When Forest Department officials were visiting villages in Tirthan valley, I observed that both village men and women of high and low-caste made an effort to demonstrate that Premlata Devi’s opinions were being considered and discussed seriously. However, when I spoke with these same people after the Forest Department officials left, they told me that, “Premlata thinks too much of herself, she feels that because she is always attending training sessions she is above us; we all know that the Forest Department just wants to showcase a *Harijan* woman.”

When attending another VFDC meeting, I noticed that questions from village people as well as from Nortem Singh, the Shilraj *panchayat* forest guard, were directed to the committee vice president and not the president. At the end of the meeting I asked Nortem Singh, who was also of a low-caste, why queries were not addressed to the president. He replied, “the president is low-caste”. I was surprised to learn that not only were the high-caste village members directing their questions to the vice president, but also low-caste villagers. Almost all low-caste village people (particularly Nortem Singh) I interviewed for this research expressed their frustrations with the discrimination they experienced on a daily basis. They felt that it was indeed a sizeable barrier and prevented them “from progressing”. I asked Nortem Singh why he and other low-caste village people directed their comments and questions to the high-caste vice president rather than the low-caste president:

“Really who will listen to the lower caste member? He was given his position to fill quotas. If we want to be heard we need to speak to the higher caste members, it is the only way our problems may possibly be addressed.”

This exchange between Nortem Singh and me made evident that village people were very well aware of institutional structures and behaviours higher authorities required from them, and that project success relied on collaboration between government officials and village people. These structures and behaviours were required to depict that requirements for development agendas associated with decentralization were being achieved. Although village people reorganized to align themselves to meet development goals set out by the Forest Department, their social interactions continued to be shaped by existing social structures and hierarchies (Baviskar 2004). Why do the members of a VFDC, in theory answerable to fellow village people, participate in reorienting the project’s mandate? While the possibility for improved standing within the village may be the rationale for Ram Chand’s actions, other VFDC members may not have the same objectives. For others the it may be the cultural distance between the formal democratic processes that underscore the creation of VFDCs and their everyday experience with structures of governance and rule (Li 1999, Baviskar 2004). Decisions are usually made by a handful of village leaders who have established relationships with government officials. In the absence of political mobilisation, people like Nortem Singh may understand the objectives of within the framework of their everyday experiences. This may lead him and others like him, to accept undemocratic decision making processes and carry on as usual. For example my conversations with Ram Chand revealed that challenging his understanding of participation in VFDCs would result in one being excluded from all village activities, not just from VFDC activities.

However institutions such as VFDCs cannot simply be regarded as a futile attempt at creating democratic processes of decision-making. In some cases these new institutions can ultimately transform people’s attitudes and interactions with various government and local actors. Arun Agrawal’s book *Environmentality* (2006) examines how new institutions have a hand in reshaping social relationships over the long term. His study looks at the change in popular attitudes toward environmental protection in the North Indian Himalayas. Village people in Kumaon, who, in the 1920s, set their forests on fire to protest against British regulations to protect the environment, began

to conserve these same forests in the 1990s. The transition to custodianship was neither smooth nor seamless; however, village people's interest in forest conservation is noteworthy because it illustrates how people balance protection, self-respect, and self-interest, while negotiating with wider structures of power. Agrawal (2006) looks at the relationship between government and its citizens to explore how community decision making around regulations on resource use and access changed the views of people. In this study Agrawal (2006) explains the interconnections between the birth of environmental identities and the reshaping of relations between state and local populations. He emphasizes that multiple areas of study can come together to better understand environmental change and conservation, an approach he labels 'environmentality'. Agrawal's (2006) approach lends itself well to the development of an understanding of Tirthan valley in the future, when village people have had a chance to engage, for a sustained period of time, with JFM motivated forest management initiatives.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the idea that decentralization is achieved and 'successful' when bureaucracy retains ultimate control. I also argued that while high-level state officials envisage some projects, their implementation is only possible through the participation of key village people. Key people are those that are in a position to alter structures to meet their needs and achieve project objectives. I highlighted Govind's experience with micro-plans, which required him to manipulate the data collected from village people in order to provide desired results. Ram Chand's understanding of participation allowed him to deliver the impression that the VFDCs were successful in including all members in decision-making. These types of collaborations between state officials and village brokers (a term borrowed by Lewis and Mosse 2006) work to reorient the project's objectives for conservation and socio-economic development. In instances where local populations do not have the capacity or are unwilling to hold the state, its administrators, and their own elected committee members accountable, they collaborate in creating the pretence of decentralization.

Agrawal's (2006) research shows that change can be affected through practices of new institutions like VFDCs. This chapter goes one step further to propose the importance of understanding the complex history of relations between the state and

the local populations to appreciate how collaboration takes shape over the long-term. It reveals the need to re-examine the interconnected network of people and institutions that are continually changing shape and negotiated in an attempt to create order. In the next chapter I continue with my examination of how people rework narratives written for them. I question claims, made by GHNP and the Forest Department, that the “local population is heavily dependent on forests to meet livelihood needs”, and that “the medicinal plant trade is the primary source of income for most local families”. I examine how, for people residing in Tirthan valley, priorities and needs are transforming in response to the increasing number of options that are becoming available to them. I ask; how do local populations mediate their relationships and interactions with market?

CHAPTER 4 RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN TRANSITION

In the Indian Himalayas both national and international interests for rural poverty alleviation have centred on the “forest dependent poor” and forest areas actual and potential contributions to one’s livelihood requirements (Arnold 2001; Dove 1993; Wunder 2001). In remote locations like the Indian Himalayas, the rugged terrain, low population densities, limited communications and transportation infrastructure, infertile soils, and difficult climates are often seen as barriers to development (Dewi *et al.* 2006). Characteristics typical in isolated regions such as the Himalayas hinder forest harvesting and the conversion of forestlands to agricultural lands. The challenges inherent to the Himalayan geography are believed to limit economic opportunities available to people who live in these areas (Wunder 2001).

The poverty of forest-dependent communities is also associated with histories of dispossession. For example, in Skaria’s (1999) examination of the environmental and cultural histories of the Dangs in Gujarat he argues that ‘environmental protection’ involved great violence and oppression against forest people; this began with settling ‘wild people’ into agricultural villages and enclosures around forest lands to declare them state-owned forests. Crane’s (2006) study in South Africa of biodiversity conservation and land rights shows the link between historical dispossession and poverty. His research examines the connection between a desire for conservation and the apartheid history of dispossession that produced starkly unequal land ownership patterns and widespread rural poverty.⁶⁰

While there is no systematic estimate of poverty among forest-based economies, there are higher occurrences of poverty among tribal populations and casual or migrant workers dependent on forests. Kumar *et al.* (2002) noted that the poorest in India live in and around forest regions and that poverty has been largely unavoidable for a large percentage of the tribal populations in the country. In fact, he believes their condition is worse than that of casual workers and migrant workers found in rural areas.

In Tirthan valley we see a scenario different from what is referenced above. In this dissertation I examine the term “forest dependent poor” as it is applied to

⁶⁰ There is a great deal of literature that discusses the link between poverty and dispossession. Also see Bernstein 1996; Andre *et al.* 1998; Vorster 2006; Buchanan 2005; Sansone 2003; Bozzoli 1990, Townsend 1985, Cramer *et al.* 1998.

local⁶¹ populations residing in Tirthan valley. I do this because here, unlike in other regions in India, Anderson's 1886 Forest Settlement Report (discussed in Chapter 2) was instrumental in limiting dispossession. While the 1886 Settlement Report shrank the local population's access and use of forest resources⁶², the Settlement Report allowed local populations to retain their rights. Thus residents of Tirthan valley have a greater sense of security than the hundreds of forest dependent communities found throughout the Indian subcontinent. When the 'threat' of conservation was looming, Anderson's Settlement Report was an invaluable tool by which residents could assert their claim to land being demarcated for the GHNP (Baviskar 2003) (GHNP will be discussed in Chapter 6).

Conservation and forest management efforts in Tirthan valley have been fuelled by the belief that local livelihoods are heavily dependent on forest resources, and current rates of use will lead to unprecedented forest degradation⁶³ (see Pandey & Wells 1997). However, this narrative ignores the multiple exchanges and activities that shape everyday life for a large number of people in Tirthan valley. Forest resources now make up only one small component of an average person's livelihood in Tirthan valley. The "forest dependent" narrative ignores the number of transformations taking place in rural society and with it the changing priorities of people residing in these landscapes. Situating people in the "forest dependent" category simplifies the livelihoods of *pahari*⁶⁴ people, dismisses the historical context that has shaped forest use in the region, and ignores the fact that livelihood related activities are evolving in response to external influences – such as market access and market growth. In this chapter I examine how the term "forest dependent" is applied to this specific context with the intention of explaining the complex nature of livelihoods in light of development narratives that work to simplify rural livelihoods (Roe 1991)⁶⁵. In my analysis I move beyond a simple model of community in change to explore the locality, history, and socio-

⁶¹ I use the term villagers recognizing that villagers are not homogenous groups but are differentiated based on gender, caste, age, and socio-economic status.

⁶² Prior to the settlement, local populations could exercise their free will; now rights holders require permission from the Forest Department before removing resources from forests.

⁶³ In Chapter 2 I discuss how forest management priorities were historically shaped around fears of degradation.

⁶⁴ *Pahari* means mountain; people indigenous to the mountainous regions of India are often referred to as *Paharis*.

⁶⁵ In Chapter 2 I make mention of how observations in one area are extrapolated to represent situations in an entire region; I feel that this occurs when explaining goals for poverty alleviation in Kullu. "Forest dependent communities" describes a group that may no longer be forest dependent, and their use of forests was shaped historically by a different set of regulations than other regions of India.

economic processes that local populations engage with every day. Rigg (2006) challenges the idea that to address poverty development interventions should primarily focus on farming and redistribution of land. He argues that by placing an emphasis on farming and land redistribution “overlooks the direction and trajectory of change in the Rural South and, therefore, also overlooks the emerging spaces for development intervention” (2006:4). I follow in this vein and to show that in Tirthan valley village people’s relationships with transforming social and geographic landscapes and continued incorporation into a market economy.

I begin this chapter by describing *pahari* society to demonstrate that *pahari* identity has for centuries been influenced by interactions with outside forces such as the colonial state, markets, and most recently development projects. As Pigg explains, ‘locality is constituted in, and through relations, to wider systems, not simply impinged upon.’ (Pigg 1996:165; cited in Mosse 2005:48). In this region one’s socio-economic position is tied to one’s caste. Once I have introduced what *pahari* society entails, I move on to explain caste relations in a *pahari* context. The interpretation of Kullu society and social relations I offer relies both on my personal observations while residing in Tirthan valley from 2004 until the winter of 2005, and Berreman’s (1970) *Hindu’s of the Himalayas: Ethnography and Change*. This then leads to an examination of rural livelihoods, the crux of this chapter. I observed a reshaping in forest resource use patterns, values, priorities, and lifestyles as opportunities to engage with markets emerged. Market access has contributed to increasingly diversified livelihoods. I discuss livelihood options that are currently available to local populations in light of new markets. In recognition of the gendered nature of livelihoods and associated priorities, the section to follow provides a gendered analysis of labour, interests in markets and livelihood activities, and knowledge of resource use. In the final section of this chapter I circle back to the point I introduce in the opening section of this chapter, migrant communities and their dependence on local forest resources. Here I draw attention to migration and migrants in an attempt to show that there are a multitude of communities residing in the valley, each with different requirements from, and priorities for, forest resources. Forest management interventions, such as VFDCs (discussed in Chapter 3) and conservation and development programs (discussed in Chapter 5 and 6) have excluded some groups with an interest in forestlands. These groups are often excluded because they do not fit into neatly defined categories or the prescribed

image of "local". In Tirthan valley I discovered that the most dependent on forest resources for their livelihoods were not in fact local villagers; it was migrant populations who relied most heavily on local forest resources. The determination with which the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department pursued the rhetoric of "local people" and "forest dependent communities" overlooked the direction and trajectory of change taking place in the region. In this chapter I show that lives and livelihoods in Tirthan valley, for *pahari* people, are becoming increasingly divorced from forest based activities. I imagine that in the foreseeable future, patterns and associations of wealth will become more diffused and diverse as non-forest-based occupations and mobility continue to delocalize livelihoods.

4.1 Understanding *Pahari* Society

I begin this chapter by introducing *pahari* people, their history in this region and the nature of their interactions and relations with outsiders⁶⁶. I do this because while residing in Tirthan valley I observed that *pahari* people were relatively at ease in their exchanges with outsiders. I attributed the gradual transition from a subsistence economy to a market economy in part to this ability to freely engage with opportunities and ideas coming from outside of the valley.

Kullu was a subdivision of the larger Kangra division of Punjab in 1846 at the close of the Anglo-Sikh war. In 1963, Kullu was upgraded to a separate District of Punjab in independent India and in 1966 merged with the newly formed territory of Himachal Pradesh. When Himachal Pradesh was given the status of a state in the Indian Union in 1971, Kullu became a central district of Himachal Pradesh (see Appendix A). Kullu is situated in a moist mountainous zone and its society, similar to other mountain societies in India, differs significantly from the society of the plains, a difference emphasized and sustained discursively by both villagers and state administrators.⁶⁷

The inhabitants of the Himalayan Mountains between western Kashmir and eastern Nepal have common and distinct cultural, linguistic, and historical traditions (Berreman 1970:73). According to Berreman, this mountainous belt can

⁶⁶ I use outsiders to refer to all those not permanently residing in Tirthan valley or not native to the valley.

⁶⁷ When *pahari* people use the term "plains people", they are referring to people from urban centres in flat regions such as Chandigarh, Delhi, Bombay, and Amritsar.

be considered to be a distinct “culture area” that developed at least in part due to its geographical isolation. People of this region use the term *pahari* (of the mountains) to collectively describe themselves, although there are considerable differences among people from different valleys. Berreman (1970:77-79) notes that the *paharis* as a group share a common and distinctive linguistic stock.

The *pahari* identity has implications for relationships and interactions between local populations and government officials. Berreman notes that in encounters with *non-paharis*⁶⁸, ‘the *pahari* feels himself to be at a disadvantage in terms of knowledge, sophistication, and prestige’ (1970:86). *Paharis* are thought by people of the plains to be ritually, spiritually, and morally inferior (Berreman 1972). Higher-level government officials are often *non-paharis* and a *pahari/non-pahari* hierarchy places *paharis* in a lower and occasionally defensive position:

The trend towards mobility has become prominent only recently, not because contacts did not previously exist between the plains and the mountains, but because only with national sovereignty and with improved communication have plainsmen come to constitute an important positive reference group for *paharis*. Only recently have they been in a position to judge and to reward or deprive *paharis* by their own approval or disapproval (Berreman 1970:95).

Nevertheless, *pahari* people’s willingness to interact with *non-paharis* has increased their access to services and their knowledge of the world outside of Kullu District. There are two major groups of “outsiders” with whom *pahari* people interacted with regularly. The first group consisted of people from the plains, most often high-ranking government officials, such as the DFO (from Bihar), CF (from Punjab), and the GHNP Director (from Delhi); the second group were shop keepers and traders from Punjab – who were most often Sikh.

The one road into Tirthan valley was built in the early 1980s, and since that time the valley has opened up considerably to people from other regions while also giving *pahari* people access to opportunities in urban centres. Supplies for the shops in Tirthan valley come from Kullu⁶⁹, Mandi or Amritsar. I often observed Punjabi wholesale suppliers driving up and down the valley with their goods to sell

⁶⁸ A large majority of government officials working in the region are *non-paharis*.

⁶⁹ When I write Kullu I am referring to the town of Kullu. Kullu town is located in Kullu district.

to shop keepers. In Banjar⁷⁰ there was a relatively large and growing population of traders from Punjab who initially came to the region to sell supplies, and eventually settled in the town because of the number of opportunities available to them.

Village men and women often referred to Punjabi traders as “outsiders” who have taken over the Bazaar:

“They live very separate from us, although we are neighbours and their children go to local schools⁷¹, but they speak Punjabi at home and socialize amongst themselves. For marriage they look for spouses in Punjab, and often they think that we locals are beneath them”.

My interactions with shopkeepers from Punjab were not as extensive as those with *pahari* people. Conversations usually occurred when I bought household supplies or while I waited for a bus. Almost all of the traders and shopkeepers I encountered continued to have a home in Punjab and many sent their children to school in Punjab. “Home” would always be Punjab and a majority of their investments, both social and economic, continued to be made at “Home”. My exchanges with shopkeepers ranged from quick hellos, to details about mundane day-to-day tasks, to their family histories. I was keen to understand the types of relationships and discussions shopkeepers had with the “locals”. I came to learn most shopkeepers did not feel there was hostility between themselves and Kullu village people. Nevertheless, my personal belief at the time was that for some shopkeepers day-to-day existence was simpler if they viewed their relationships with locals strictly in terms of monetary transactions – they had products to sell and local populations required these products:

“I work and provide for my family. I have a few close friends here, primarily Punjabis like myself. This is my home. I socialize more with Punjabis because of cultural and social similarities but feel no hostility towards locals; they buy from me and provide me with business”.

While Rahul Singh (a village man born and raised in Tirthan valley) and I

⁷⁰ 30 years ago Banjar was just another village in the valley; however, it is now the administrative centre for Tirthan valley. Banjar hosts a police headquarters, a veterinary clinic, a small hospital, three schools, and numerous small shops.

⁷¹ The Punjabi community send their children to Trinity, an Independent School that opened in Banjar five years ago, and prior to this they would send their children to their villages in Punjab to be educated.

discussed details of village life, he explained to me that, “we are not as enterprising as the Punjabis: look at what they have done for themselves.” Rahul Singh proceeded to tell me, “Only after the Punjabis opened shops did locals begin opening small shops”. The suppliers who came to the region to sell goods to Punjabi shopkeepers began to see local people slowly transitioning from farmer to shopkeeper. Initially, shopkeepers from Punjab also functioned as medicinal plant traders. In recent years local shopkeepers in the Tirthan valley have begun themselves to hire local men and migrant workers to collect medicinal plants from the valley, and these local shopkeepers then sell medicinal plants to Punjabi shopkeepers living in Banjar. Some local shopkeepers collecting plants were willing to take greater risks and thus sidestepped Punjabi shopkeepers in Banjar, going directly to traders in Kullu town or Amritsar. Medicinal plant collectors were sometimes found to also be middlemen— the first of many, along the supply chain from Tirthan valley to Delhi and onwards (in Chapter 5 I provide an in depth analysis and description of this supply chain).

After Punjabi shopkeepers, the second prominent group of outsiders in the region are Nepali men, a majority of whom were medicinal plant collectors. Nepali men form a sizeable group of migrant labourers in Kullu district and in India as a whole. In Tirthan valley this group lived in shacks or lean-tos; they were seasonal migrants willing to work in conditions local populations no longer considered acceptable. In the final section of this chapter I come back to migrant labour in the context of medicinal plant trade.

A *pahari* person’s ability to access services and ideas from outside the region was often influenced by their socio-economic position. In following section I examine how one’s caste shaped one’s ability to interact with the world outside of Tirthan valley. I was initially resistant to provide a discussion on caste in this dissertation. My apprehension in this regard stems from the belief that caste can dominate a discussion to such an extent that it overshadows the variety of other factors that influence one’s ability to interact with the world around them. The fieldwork for this dissertation was my first opportunity to live in an Indian village, and through the experience I was exposed to daily negotiations that take place between people of different castes and to how one’s access to opportunities and resources is significantly influenced by one’s position within the caste hierarchy. Reluctantly realizing that I cannot ignore this as a critical factor that shaped

relationships and transactions, I describe below the caste system and how it is practiced in Kullu District.

4.1.1 Caste Systems

The caste system may very well be the single most-researched aspect of Indian society. Berreman (1972:19) defines castes as ‘ranked endogamous divisions of society in which membership is heredity and permanent’. The 1899 Gazetteer stated that *Kanets*, a low-caste of cultivators, were the predominant caste group in the eastern Himalayas and in the Punjab. Ibbetson (1916:198), quoting a forest settlement officer, claims that the *Kanets* in Kullu were in fact ‘children of women of the hills by *Rajputs* who came up from the plains’. Village people in Kullu District and Tirthan valley identified themselves as *Rajputs* and have in practice erased the *Kanet* identity (Ahluwalia 1966). *Kolis* were the most common lower caste group in Kullu District, although several other castes also resided in the region. Almost all residents of Kullu owned a parcel of land irrespective of their caste, and were involved in agricultural activities to varying degrees. *Brahmins* generally did not plough land; they employed others to do it for them. Those belonging to the lower caste continued with the trade occupation associated with their caste⁷² alongside cultivating their small plots of land. Since Independence, the national census of India has not enumerated castes. The only category enumerated is scheduled caste/scheduled tribe. This is important to note because lower caste villagers in Kullu identified themselves as “S.C” or “caste” rather than maintaining specific individual caste distinctions.

Upper and lower caste households were spatially separated in older settlements of Kullu District. In Tirthan valley villages were generally clustered, particularly at higher altitudes. Higher caste households occupied favoured locations, which were characterized by their proximity to the primary village water source, availability of forested lands and superior agricultural land. Harcourt (1870:148) describes this spatial distribution:

In an ordinary Kullu village the houses will be found arranged in a rude disorder that bears

⁷² *Kolis* are cultivators, *Lohars* are blacksmiths, *Barras* are bamboo basket makers, and *Chamars* are tanners and leather workers.

little approach to the semblance of streets. As a rule, the *Brahmins* take the highest sites though this is not always observed, the *Kanets*, the *Daghees*, and the subdivisions of the later caste occupying the lower tier of houses.

Guruda village is a typical example of how households were distributed within a village. *Rajput* houses are clustered towards the higher end of the slope, closer to drinking water and to forests. The homes in which most upper caste village people lived were large and spacious. Traditionally they were made from mud and wood - to keep homes cool in summer and warm in winter. The houses were raised off the ground, and below is a room in which livestock (cattle, sheep and goat) were kept. Inside the house was a large main room in which a *tandoor* (a wood burning stove) was installed. The entire family slept in the main room with the *tandoor* in the winter months, because it is the warmest room in the house. Most homes had an additional room that is adjacent to the main room, used for storing blankets, clothes, flour, and rice. This room also functioned as a sleeping room when guests came to stay and extra space was required. The floor of the house was uncluttered; with a few small *mandris* (mats made from grass growing wild in their fields) or small wool rugs on the floor. Off the main room there is usually a staircase that took one up above the main room and into the *rasoi* (kitchen) where meals were made. Lower caste homes were much simpler; they did have a terrace, a barn below the home, or a second floor to house the *rasoi*.

Increasingly village people were choosing to live in their *dogris*. In the Tirthan valley, agricultural fields were rarely located adjacent to the homestead; fields were often a few kilometres from a village. Village people build simple temporary residences adjacent to their agricultural fields known as a *dogri*. A *dogri* minimizes the daily travel to and from fields, particularly for women who were the primary stewards of family fields, and allowed one to keep better watch of one's crops. A few members of a family live here (most often one of younger sons, his wife and children). This arrangement hints that the "joint"⁷³ family is becoming less common and also less preferred. Many men opt to separate from their family after marriage; the *dogris* allow families to be "joint" in principle without sharing the same physical space. In interviews with both men and women I also learned that they prefer to live

⁷³ By joint I mean families in which sons, after marriage, continue to live in their father's home, while daughters move to their husband's family's home.

in their *dogris* to distance themselves from what Gita, a *Rajput* village woman, called the “everyday fighting that occurs when living too close to one another”. As *dogris* became permanent residences for village people they increased in size; some were fitted with electricity and telephones.

On one occasion while I was visiting Gita in her home, Jindi (a *Harijan* woman) children arrived; they first stood at the door and then slowly made their way into the main room to watch television with Gita’s son. Gita explained that, “as long as they do not come into the *rasoi* it is okay”. She explained that in the *dogris* customs are different:

“It is not so strict in these areas. We socialize more freely with the *Harijans*. We go into their homes, but never eat anything or use any of their utensils. Outside of the home we sit together and talk”.

However, when Gita’s husband arrived home and found Jindi’s children in the main room, he looked perplexed and asked why “are these children inside the house?” Vinita Devi, an elder *Rajput* village woman, and also from the wealthiest family in the hamlet, would not go into *Harijan* homes nor did she allow them into her home. In these newly formed hamlets that consisted of *dogris*, rules and systems around caste were matters of individual choice and there was less interference by other village members in these types of decisions. I asked Gita if in Chopna (the village of her “proper”,⁷⁴ home, her father-in-law’s home) she would have allowed Jindi’s children in to watch television. She responded:

“It is difficult to be so free in the village [‘proper’ village as opposed to the newly formed hamlet], certain rules and social norms must be followed, everyone lives so close to one another, and people will talk and gossip”.

The above observations and conversations provide insight into how caste influences everyday interactions and the spatial arrangement of villages in Tirthan valley. In subsequent chapters I will show how caste relations appear in encounters

⁷⁴ Gita used the word ‘proper’ to refer to her husband’s natal village. By this she means to refer to spaces that have been constructed many years prior, and have changed very little, in both physical and social structure. It was difficult to make choices regarding rules and practices around caste as an individual in ‘proper villages’.

with projects for conservation and development. However, at this stage of the dissertation I focus on rural people's involvement in agriculture-based economies. Agricultural cultivation is instrumental in facilitating the diversification of rural livelihoods; one's ability to tap into this opportunity is most often influenced by one's caste, gender and socio-economic position. Below I provide my interpretation of how agricultural systems are shaped and influenced in Tirthan valley.

4.2 Farm Economy

Agriculture based economies are of significant importance to the people of Tirthan valley. To understand the complex and evolving nature of people's interests in agriculture, I examine how priorities were determined and decisions were made, and who participated in these two processes. I introduce the multiple activities and exchanges that village people in Tirthan valley participated in to meet their livelihood requirements. This discussion also makes way for my analysis of the use of NFTP's in Chapter 5, by situating forest use within a larger socio-economic framework.

Kunal, a relatively well-off *Rajput* village man explained that rural economics in this region was a balance between agriculture, animal husbandry and use of forest resources. In numerous conversation I was told that "here in Himachal Pradesh we do not worry about starvation; even the poorest family is able to feed itself because almost everyone has access to some land". Kunal, along with a number of other *Rajput* village men clarified that in the last 20 years village people were earning what they considered substantial income from crop cultivation. Prior to this agriculture was largely subsistence oriented, involving grain crops such as *kodra*, *kinnaura*, *saryara*, and barley. These "traditional" crops were still found scattered throughout the valley but in much smaller quantities than what was historically available. When I asked about these "traditional" crops both village men and women explained that their parents or grandparents planted these crops and that the grains were much more nutritious than the cash crops local people were presently cultivating. I asked why there was no longer an interest in cultivating grains that were known to be nutritionally superior to what was currently planted (maize, kidney beans and wheat). They replied that those crops

were far more labour intensive and yields were much less than what was required to feed an entire household for the year. The crops now cultivated by local households required less input and the surplus was sold to other neighbours or in the local market.

In Tirthan valley livelihoods strategies were differentiated by economic status and influenced by caste identity. Lower caste village people's ability to engage in agricultural markets was relatively limited because they either had very little marginal land or no land. Those that did have land managed to grow just enough subsistence crops (kidney beans and maize) to sustain them through the year. Many lower caste villagers voiced frustrations with their inability to reap the rewards that came with cultivating cash crops. Tek Ram spoke of the difficulties he had in growing enough food to feed his family for the entire year. He and his son worked as daily wage labourers in addition to farming, wages earned allowed them to supplement their shortfall in food items and household supplies.

Apples were introduced to this region in the early 1800s by British officers, and were by far the largest crop cultivated in the valley and district. As higher altitudes provided the best climate for growing apples, village people living in these regions demarcated large portions of their land solely for apple cultivation. Those with land near the road, and thus at lower altitudes, had smaller apple orchards, but were able to cultivate plums and pears (also introduced species). Himachal Pradesh supplied the entire country with apples; these apples were exported to Nepal (Singh 1978; Shabab 1981).

In the early 1980s the government of Himachal Pradesh actively encouraged apple cultivation by providing training and subsidised seedlings to interested locals. Nurseries were established throughout Kullu District and pesticides were available at government depots located in all market areas in the district. In recent years garlic and cauliflower production have taken off. Other vegetables such as peas and cabbage were also grown and sold in local markets. The Himachal Pradesh Horticulture Department was very active in providing information on new technologies and new crop varieties to interested farmers. Initially, sample seeds were provided for trial and those interested in continuing with cultivation of these varieties of crops were able to purchase more seeds at subsidised rates from Horticulture Department depots.

Villages located at higher altitudes also benefited from *charus* (hereafter

referred to as cannabis)⁷⁵ production. Cannabis and apple harvesting seasons coincide (October until early November). Villages at lower altitudes were unable to grow high quality cannabis because altitude affects the quality. Villages at lower altitudes were also visible from the main road and relatively easy to access; the risk of being caught by the local police increased exponentially the closer the village was to the road. Cannabis was originally cultivated for the fibre (hemp); however, now it was primarily grown to meet both national and international market demands for narcotics. The SDM was quite vigilant in his effort to curb cannabis cultivation in the region and sent police to villages on a number of occasions to cut down cannabis plants. Many village people told me that the cannabis trade began approximately 10 years ago, before which very little was produced, and only for personal use. When I first arrived in Tirthan valley, several village people pointed out that cannabis production was illegal and denied any involvement in its production. However, in October when the cannabis season was at its peak, these same people would shyly smile at me as they rubbed the hemp leaves together producing cannabis. I asked how cannabis was traded, considering that it was illegal and the police were cutting down plants, and fined or arrested people caught producing it. Women from Soja village told me that usually a man known to the village came by in November as the season was ending and purchased all available cannabis. They were unaware of the rate at which cannabis is sold outside the valley; however they very well aware that as cannabis is transported out of the valley its price increased exponentially.

Cannabis is both cultivated and grown wild. Because low-caste village people have very little land they were unable to cultivate cannabis, but a large number of them collect wild cannabis growing along roadsides or in reserved forests. Majority of households that actively cultivate cannabis were located in isolated communities at higher altitudes, in lower altitudes village people grew cannabis in and around other crops. While I was hiking up to a high altitude village, I came upon a crippled man sitting in a field of cannabis; he was rubbing hemp leaves between his hands producing cannabis.⁷⁶ The village woman I was

⁷⁵ The word *charus* is used to refer to the crop as well as the resulting product – “they grow *charus*” and “they make *charus*”.

⁷⁶ The leaves of the plant are placed in between the hands and rubbed together until a black resin completely covers the hands. The black resin is then scrapped off and moulded into a ball.

with sympathised with him, remarking that this was the only means by which he could provide for this family. Cannabis production has brought new found wealth to many village people, and has also provided a viable alternative means of income for lower caste village people, women, and those unable to actively participate in a wage economy.

Bamboo was also utilised extensively by people in Tirthan valley, primarily to make *kiltas* (baskets with shoulder straps to carry grass, apples, etc. on one's back). Only lower caste village men, specifically the *Barra* caste, were involved in this craft and its trade. The bamboo was collected "deep in the forest and very difficult to find", Bimi Devi explained to me. She collected bamboo because her husband was very ill with asthma and incapable of such labour-intensive work. I often saw Bimi Devi's husband sitting in the sun making *kiltas* and baskets day in and day out in the summer and autumn months. When I asked him how much he sold his baskets for, he replied, "50 rupees for a small *kilta*, 60 rupees for a large *kilta*, and 30-40 rupees for a basket". The *kilta* craft however is not of interest to Bimi's sons who were employed as daily wage labourers, "they are not interested in such things, they say it is too difficult and a waste of time". Recently manufacturers of household supplies began manufacturing blue plastic *kiltas*; they were available for purchase in Kullu town and were slowly making their way into the valley. "They are sturdy and have thick cloth shoulder strap", explained a local shopkeeper. This has obvious implications for village people like Bimi Devi, her husband, and the *Barra* group in general. At the time of this field research there was no real threat that the *Barra* group would be pushed out of bamboo *kiltas* trade, as there were still significantly less in cost than plastic *kiltas*. However, this craft may become obsolete in the future not only because of decreasing demand but also because young men born into this occupational category prefer to participate in daily wage labour.

Wool and the variety of articles made of it was one commodity that circulated very visibly both within and outside the region in the early 18th and 19th century. This was not surprising considering the economic significance of sheepherding. However, locally produced wool was not always sufficient to meet raw material requirements of the extensive cottage industry that flourished throughout Himachal Pradesh, in addition to the considerable import demands. Kullu area was one of two districts engaged in the wool business (Bashahr being

the other). It was not only the fortunate location of these two districts, next to busy trade routes between western Tibet and north India, that allowed them to benefit from wool trade. These areas also allowed Central Asian, Ladakhi and Tibetan traders to interact with merchants from Punjab towns. Even local peasants found the markets of these two districts quite convenient for their relatively smaller trade-related activities. In essence it was here that Tibetan and Central Asian trade began to take on a clearly Indian character (Singh 1998).

Towns that hosted festivals and fairs were especially significant as centres for exchange. Coldstream's (1910) observations of the Dusshera festival in Sultanpur (which is now referred to as Kullu (town)) indicated that there was a great deal of trade during festivals. I also had the opportunity to attend the Dusshera festival in Kullu and observed similar commodity exchanges:

Much business is done. It is frequented by Baltis, Tibetans, Lahulas *zemindars* of Kulu, local shopkeepers and merchants from the plains. A very great quantity of Kulu blankets and cloth is bought and sold, the Lahualis trade in wool and ponies and the *zemindar* finds a market for every commodity he has to sell (Coldstream, Kulu Settlement Report, 1910-13:3).

As is apparent from the transactions carried out at these festivals, people of Kullu district were both consumers and intermediaries. They bought Tibetan wool in order to make *pattus*, not only for their personal use but also in order to export 'down country' (Kangra District Gazetteer 1917:60, 74, 129-130). Peasants also bought wool from Kullu for weaving into cloth at home. Figures provided by the Banjara trading post for the first 6 months of 1916 give some indication of the proportion of wool that was exported from Kullu southward: 'out of the total value of three *lakh* rupees more than one *lakh* consisted of wool and pashm' (Kangra District Gazetteer 1917:130).

With the introduction of apples in the last 20 years, there has been a gradual shift from wool production to cash crops. *Pattus* were still made and sold at the Dusshera festival; however, the number of women who know how to make *pattus* has slowly declined. The craft of creating *Pattus* falls within a high-caste woman's domain because *pattu* making requires substantial upfront capital investment – one must purchase large quantities of wool in addition to the handloom, which can be quite costly. The few women who make *pattus* in Tirthan valley sold them to other

village men and women who either do not know how to make them, or do not have the time and equipment to make them.

Most village people now focus their energies and resources on cattle rearing for dairy products such as *ghi* and milk, and for manure. After agriculture, animal husbandry⁷⁷ is an important economic activity in the region. Animal husbandry also requires capital that low- caste village people either do not have or cannot access. In my time in the valley, I met two low-caste village people with one cow each and both looked to be very malnourished. Low-caste village people purchase milk and *ghi* from high-caste village people as and when they are able to. In Tirthan valley specifically, and in India generally, low-caste and poor villagers have little room to manoeuvre and fewer options available to them in terms of access to market opportunities. They lack monetary and social capital, and therefore require greater skill and resources to maximise output for the least cost (Mosse 2005: 61).

4.3 Gender, Cultivation, and Resource Use

Forest use and agricultural practices provide one perspective with which gender relations can be observed and understood. In Tirthan valley I found that women were fully conversant in all farming and forest related activities with the exception of ploughing, which I observed in many parts of India as an activity reserved for male household member. On agricultural land women's input consisted of seed management, weeding, harvesting, and all post-harvest operations⁷⁸. In forestlands women were primarily responsible for collecting fuel-wood and fodder. The gendered division of responsibilities for agriculture production and forestry implies that gendered interests have a hand in decision-making related to priorities for agricultural land and for forested lands (Mosse 2005:64). For example in Tirthan valley men were responsible for acquiring and maintaining assets and their interests predominantly lie in maximizing cultivation of crops for external markets. On the other hand village women, whose main focus is the family's welfare, place greater emphasis on maintaining maize, kidney bean, and vegetable crops (Mosse 2005:64). To this end women take responsibility for rationing the harvest so that

⁷⁷ Or alongside - options vary depending on economic status.

⁷⁸ Other than those associated with the actual trading of the produce.

they are able to meet their household's subsistence requirements until the next harvesting season.

In the summer, and fall months, women rise between four and five in the morning to collect grass from *gasnis*.⁷⁹ Grass cutting in the *gasni* takes place from late July until late October, in preparation for winter months when little grass is available for livestock. Most women would make the long arduous climb up to their *gasni* only if grass requirements for winter months could not be met from their own agriculture fields. Women travelled to their *gasni*'s in a group and collectively cut grass in each other's *gasni*. Anu explained:

“In this way the work is completed quickly, and it is more enjoyable. We rise at between four and five am and go up together, we take *roti* and rations with us and return as the sun is setting – it is very difficult work, men cannot do this work”.

At the end of the day the grass collected is brought down to the homestead from the *gasni* on the women's backs, it is laid out to dry in the sun and then stored in the shed until winter. Travelling by foot up into the mountains, cutting grass in the hot sun the entire day, and then carrying grass back to the homestead made grass cutting a gruelling and physically demanding activity. In addition to ensuring that requirements for grass were met, women were responsible for collecting water in the early morning and evening, washing clothes, cooking meals, cleaning the home, weeding, harvesting and storing the maize and kidney beans in September and October before the winter sets in. The summer and early fall were especially demanding months for village women.

The workload for women varies with age, marital status, motherhood, and wealth. The burden of household responsibilities was most heavy on newly married women and on those who are the sole woman in their family. Wealth does not necessarily translate to fewer household responsibilities for a woman. Lata's husband was considered to be a wealthy villager; however, Lata's workload could by no means be considered less than that of other village women. Her husband's extensive apple orchards took up a great deal of her time, whereas other village

⁷⁹ The higher stretches of the mountains there are covered with short grasses and devoid of trees. These areas, *gasnis*, have been demarcated and allotted to families. When I asked people questions regarding tenure and use of *gasnis*, they replied that these areas were allotted during the times of the British, and passed on from one generation to the next.

women with far fewer orchards had more time to focus on other household tasks. Lata's family also had three cows and thus she had to collect considerably more grass than most women who only had one cow. Lata would often complain that she was unfortunate to not have had a daughter, only two sons, "if I had a daughter she could help me with maintaining this household".

I found women to be proficient in key areas of resource and agriculture management, using their own networks to acquire resources (such as fuel wood, maize, kidney beans, grass, ghee, and labour). Nevertheless, village women themselves and their male counterparts, considered their contribution to the household as menial housework, and their ability as unskilled and basic (Mosse 2005:64). Women were perceived as incapable of performing activities that were presumed to require technical skill. For example to prepare for apple cultivation plant cuttings were made and trees were sprayed with pesticide. Village women were responsible for the cuttings however, both village women and men felt that only men were competent enough to spray crops with pesticide. On one occasion Vinita Devi had asked her son to stay home from college the day "spray" was to be applied to their apple crops (her husband works for the electricity board and was often away and thus Vinita relies on her son to complete tasks her husband would normally undertake). In her mind her daughter Beena did not have the skill required to spray their fields. Beena pumped the pesticide from the tank while her brother held the hose and directed the spray.

While speaking with my landlord's wife, Anu, about her work in the family's extensive agricultural fields, her husband interrupted her telling me, "what does she know; her work is simply to make *rotis*." Anu laughed at her husband's comments and walked away. In another instance, Govind, a local resident and coordinator for SAHARA NGO (discussed in Chapter 6) was explaining the agenda for a training session he was developing for local farmers. He explained why this particular session would be of interest to village men. I asked him if village women would also be invited, and he responded by reiterating that the training session was for farmers. I listed all the activities women were responsible for on a daily basis, from cultivation and grass cutting to cattle rearing, and asked him, "would that not make them farmers as well?" He looked dumbfounded; his image of "local farmer" had been brought into question. As Mosse (2005:64) notes, 'the gender division of labour is an ideological structure that naturalizes gender-based inequality rather

than a functional allocation of tasks'; village women's experience and participation in agricultural production did not give them licence to be experts or make decisions. My conversation with Govind indicated that in many people's perceptions (including village women's) women's role did not go beyond that of mother, wife, or daughter, regardless of the fact that their work in agricultural fields would readily classify them as farmers. The emphasis on women's domestic responsibilities diminishes their knowledge of cultivation and leads to the impression that village women did not make decisions related to farming, when in fact women make a number of decisions in this regard every day. For women, to maintain their households, they frequently have to manipulate these predominant notions of their knowledge, skill and contribution to society (Mosse 2005:64). It was village men that are afforded the space to interact directly with markets, institutions, and programs for "farmers". When a training session was held by the Horticulture Department, village men that are notified and it is their participation that was elicited; as Mosse notes (2005:64), 'Their appearance in public as sole decision makers simply underlines cultural ascriptions of women as dependent labour'.

4.4 Rural Transformation

Although there is increasing awareness of the role non-farming activities have in rural economies, there continues to be an overarching belief that these are supplementary to farming. In Tirthan valley local livelihoods are not only becoming increasingly divorced from forests and farming. There is growing desire to move completely away from land and farms, to services and trade, particularly among the youth. Bryceson (1997) used the term 'deagrariansation' to explain this change in occupations, means by which populations were earning an income, relocation, and transformation in social identities in rural landscapes. Rigg borrowed the term 'deagrarianisation' to understand rural change in Southeast Asia (Rigg 2001, Rigg and Nattapoolwat 2001). Deshingkar's work in Asia (2005) and Ashar's (2003) study in Bangladesh showed that there are important shifts in sources of income and in the composition of household income in rural environments. Income that is a result of farming and land-based activities is decreasing, while income resulting from remittances is increasing.

There is a significant amount of research that demonstrates access to land is no longer a necessity to reduce poverty. Francks and his colleagues (1999) work in Japan showed how rural households are responding to changes brought about by industrialization. A key lesson learned from village level studies is that scholars frequently ‘misinterpret’ the course of change in communities they study (Rigg 2006). Piers Blaikie and his colleague’s work in Nepal provides an example of how trajectories of change can be misconstrued. Rigg (2006) summarizes that Blaikie and his team’s research findings (*et al.* 1980, 2002) led them to believe that market-led integration resulting from the construction of a road in west-central Nepal would ‘not deliver the benefits of increased agricultural production, increased commercialization, and trade as forecasted in the economic appraisal documents’ (2002:1256 as cited in Rigg 2006). They argued that the result of this type of development would most certainly be growing dependency and underdevelopment (Rigg 2006). They felt that the non-agricultural sources of employment and income that did exist at that time (such as employment in foreign armies) would not keep at bay the ‘general crisis in the hills’ for very much longer (Blaikie *et al.* 1980:284). The authors (Blaikie *et al.*, 2002) conducted a follow up study in 1998. In the study they found that their conclusions did not materialize, and acknowledged that a number of their original conclusions were incorrect (Rigg 2006). There may have been a growth in dependency, but this was generally a positive outcome. Growing dependence resulted in an increase in incomes, more robust livelihoods and better standards of living (2002, Rigg 2006). After the research the team concluded that ‘the original model underestimated the capacity of the global labour market to provide work and remittances to sustain rural life and to stave off a more generalized crisis...’ (2002:1268-1269, as cited in Rigg 2006).

Over the last ten years there has been a steady rise in immigration to, and emigration from, Kullu District. With the construction of roads in the region new opportunities have presented themselves to people from inside and outside the region. Village people, usually young men, were leaving the region in search of “better” opportunities. As one young man put it, “now that we have a road and bus service we can travel outside Tirthan and find work and have access to better education”. Many village people I spoke with had a relative working in a factory in Chandigarh or Delhi. Education, newspapers, radio, television, and consumerism more generally, have profoundly altered the way that rural people think about

work, forests, farms, and their futures. Rural life seemed to be almost as monetized as urban life. Dependence on forests is considered to be for those of lower status. Youth in the valley most urgently wished to build futures that are free from the rural drudgery associated with forests and farms. For these young village people the 'line between village and not-village becomes blurred' (Pigg 1992:493). Parents are keen to also see that their children are educated and gain skills that will allow them to move out of farming and land based (Rigg and Nattapoolwat, 2001). Ram Chand from Fariyari village in Tirthan valley left in search of employment when he was 16 and found work in a pharmaceutical factory in Chandigarh. Now 22, I met him when I was having tea with his sister Shakuntala (in Fariyari village); she was beaming with pride as she introduced us. I asked him how often he returns and why; he tried to come home at least once a year, for a festival or marriage. He enjoys Chandigarh, and explained, "This will always be home". He was intimately connected to the village and village life. However, for Ram Chand to claim "progress" he moved to the city (Pigg 1992).

Rigg (2006) explains that understanding this shift in priorities in generational terms is difficult to do in terms of a methodological framework; how much of this reflects life cycle changes – in that youth leaving the valley will at a later point see the benefits of rural agriculture and return – and much of this is a more deep rooted and permanent process of cultural change which will carry into later life and the next generation? Both scenarios seemed to be at work as there are behaviours, views, and outlooks that can be associated with particular stages in the course of one's life, and there are also those that reflect the era in which people are living (Monk & Katz 1993). However, just as remittances stimulated by migration can transform consumption, investment and income patterns, so too can 'social remittances' result in changes to 'production and consumption practices' (Rigg 2006, Goldring 2004). Connecting transformation in livelihood strategies to wider social and cultural metamorphosis is necessary to provide a more complete and nuanced understanding of how everyday life takes shape for rural populations (Rigg 2006).

Improved infrastructure also facilitates circulation migration.⁸⁰ I was not

⁸⁰ Circulation migration is defined by de Haan & Rogaly as 'the migration of rural people for various forms of work elsewhere. Often returning to the place they started from' (2002:1).

living in Tirthan valley long before I became aware of the thriving migrant community consisting primarily of Biharis and Nepalis. On the main highway into Himachal Pradesh (No. 21) from Delhi one will see many groups of Rajasthani women and men repairing roads. Village men and women told me that although Biharis have been migrating to Himachal Pradesh for the last 10 years, they have been in the Tirthan valley for approximately four years. They were the predominant labour force on construction sites, and in markets selling sweets, popcorn and savoury snacks. These migrant communities (Nepalis, Biharis, and Rajasthanis) were what de Haan refers to as 'unsettled settlers', those who maintain their 'rural connections, going back regularly during their working life, or after they have retired' (1997:919).

In *Labour Migration and Rural Society* de Haan and Rogley (2002) highlight that studies have neglected to understand circulation migration adequately, preferring to focus on permanent migration. They highlight the importance of the former to everyday life throughout the developing world. A number of crucial points come to the fore when the focus is reoriented from permanent migration to circular migration. For example, instead of seeing circular migration as a disjuncture in the lives of the people and places, it is presented as very much another aspect in the everyday at both the origin and destination of migrants. Keeping this in mind the editors emphasize that circular migration should not be understood simply as a result of the limitation of social structures or as an independent action of individuals. They suggest that this type of migration should be examined as a combination of both constraints and independent actions, and located within every day issues such as the 'contests and negotiations over one's place in society' (2002:9). The editors go on to stress that understanding the situation from a predominantly economic rationale can be limiting (2002:9). Mosse and his colleagues also draw attention to the need to 'move beyond a narrow economistic viewpoint' and point out that 'migration makes villages more cosmopolitan, introduces new types of consumption (of images as well as of goods or clothing) and challenges existing social relationships' (*et al.* 2002:61).

Nepalis, recent immigrants to Tirthan valley, were primarily employed in the medicinal plant trade and to a lesser degree in apple cultivation. It is believed that Nepalis were better able to adapt to work in higher altitudes and colder climates because they came from a country with terrain similar to that of Tirthan valley. A

majority of the Bihari and Nepali immigrants in the area were males who left their families behind; some men were unmarried, all migrants in this case come with intention of returning home once the season ended. One village woman whose husband employed Bihari labourers to build their new concrete home told me:

“The Biharis working on our house live in Fariyari [village], they rent a room from my uncle and live there from February/March until about November at which time they return to their village in Bihar. It gets too cold for them in the mountains of Tirthan valley”.

Nepali migrants were also seasonal labourers. Observations from the field lead me to believe that they in fact rely on forests to secure their livelihoods to a greater extent than the local population that have been categorised by both the international and national development community as “forest dependent local communities”. Nepali migrants’ role in medicinal plant collection and trade was not documented in development or government reports; however, they formed a substantial labour force in this regard. Arguably, it was only a matter of time before medicinal plant collection was completely carried out by migrant labourers, as they move from being circular migrants to becoming permanent migrants. I return to Nepali migrants’ place in medicinal plant trade in Chapter 5.

Migration and mobility are playing a growing role in livelihoods of rural communities (de Haan & Rogely 2002). Surprisingly, government agencies have continued to overlook this progressive movement of rural livelihoods from rural spaces. Mosse’s (*et al.* 2002) study in Tribal Western India describes such bias against migration in development policy, emphasising that migration is a crucial aspect of appreciating rural livelihood strategies. Mosse and his colleagues (*et al.* 2002) go on to suggest that we reorient how this situation is understood in the context of rural development. They propose that rather than hypothesising about how to reduce migration, it may be more constructive to think about how to reduce social and economic costs associated with migration (Mosse *et al.*, 2002). They conclude that ‘it is no longer possible for a rural development project to dismiss seasonal labour migration as a marginal side-effect of environmental decline’ (Mosse *et al.* 2002: 86). Gills’ (2003) work on seasonal migration of Nepali’s lead him to the conclusion that it is ‘too important a topic for policy makers to continue to overlook’ (2003:28). In India the ‘official awareness of the magnitude of

seasonal migration or the importance of it in the lives of the [rural] poor is abysmally low' (Deshingkar & Start 2003:1). Migrant communities though invisible in policy are an obvious presence in rural society. Why do they then continue to be overlooked in development planning and policy?

In the introduction of *The Lie of the Land*, Leach and Mearns (1996) propose that in Africa international donor funding and national governmental policies around environmental management and development have been based on inaccurate science. The interpretation of science is used to encourage an agenda that shifts authority over resources from poor, rural dwellers to governments, international agencies, and in some cases, private individuals and firms. Referring to the works of E. Roe (1991), they argue that development "narratives" are produced in response to a number of circumstances, including political pressures in donor countries and bureaucratic self-preservation. It can be argued that narratives of transformation, change and development can be attractive for policy-makers (Rigg 2006), however these narrative can also lead to standardized development and planning (Rigg 2006).

In this case the conservation narrative created by government and donors agencies simply has no room for migrant communities, nor for local populations no longer dependant on forested lands to meet their livelihood requirements. If the ecodevelopment concept (discussed in Chapter 6) is imagined as a project to address 'local requirements for forest resources', how will it articulate migrant or extra local needs for forests?

4.5 Conclusions

To presume that village people are primarily dependent on forest resources to meet their subsistence needs is to ignore the complex web of networks that make up a village economy and allow for rural livelihoods to flourish. This approach to research and development can unintentionally contribute to creating generalized, narrow and static understanding of village conditions. Village people's responses, often based on limited information, tend to reinforce and legitimize existing conditions (see Mosse 2001). In the case of Tirthan valley the depiction of a community as forest dependent also allows the conservation project a "hook" with which to develop activities that will meet project goals and objectives, as discussed

in further detail in Chapter 6. This is not to say that scholars and development agencies do not acknowledge the role of other activities in rural economies and livelihoods. Regardless, the prevailing impression is that these activities are secondary to primary interests in forestry. The purpose of this chapter was to provide insight into the everyday existence of local populations in Tirthan valley, highlighting the multiple exchanges and transactions that take place daily in people's attempt to meet household requirements beyond subsistence. I go on to provide an analysis of transformations taking place in rural economies, particularly those related to forest use, introducing the concept of circular migration and migrant workers in Tirthan valley. I propose that ideas of "local" dependency on forests must be re-examined now that the "locals" once perceived to rely heavily on forests have access to different markets. This chapter makes way for an analysis specific to medicinal plant trade in Tirthan valley, and agendas for forest conservation and forest dependent livelihoods in the following Chapter. In Chapter 5 I explore the everyday practices around medicinal plants and move on to examine ideas around market based conservation and how they are negotiated.

CHAPTER 5 MEDICINAL PLANTS: ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY

Researchers, conservation and development organizations, and governments, have advocated for the commercialization of NTFPs as a means to improve rural livelihoods while also conserving ecological diversity (Nuemann & Hirsch 2000; Hecht & Cockburn 1990). NTFPs popularity as a research subject began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, ‘with increasing global concern for environmental issues...increased attention to rural poverty, and the emergence of the concept of “sustainable development”’ (Belcher *et al.* 2005).

The awareness that use and sale of NTFPs are an important aspect of livelihoods for a large number of people who live inside and outside of forested areas has also contributed to an increasing number of studies on NTFPs. This insight has made way for the idea that environmental and developmental goals could be pursued jointly (Falconer and Arnold 1989; Falconer 1990; Nepstad and Schwartzman 1992; Panayotou and Ashton 1992). Belcher *et al.* (2005) explain that ‘environmentalist and social activists championed that NTFPs extracted from the forest could provide an environmentally sustainable basis for livelihoods’, and this was what led to the creation of “‘extractive reserves” for NTFPs (rubber, Brazil nuts) in the Brazilian Amazon beginning in the 1990s, and the search for sites where a similar approach could be applied’ (Belcher *et al.* 2005). Conservation and development organizations began to show interest in NTFPs, which led to a number of initiatives that advocate for NTFPs (Belcher *et al.* 2005).

The GHNP staff were able to obtain support for their efforts related to NTFPs by utilising the ‘conservation by commercialization’ argument. They enlisted the assistance of a local NGO, SAHARA, to devise a strategy to market medicinal plants with the goal of alleviating poverty and conserving endangered species.⁸¹ Their agenda for conservation and development intended to restructure the medicinal plant commodity chain by reducing the number of middlemen and linking village NTFP collectors directly to national and ultimately global markets. In this Chapter I begin by explaining the difficulty of placing my field observations within one particular analytical framework. I then move on to explore the commodity chain for medicinal plants as it exists in Tirthan valley, outlining

⁸¹ I discuss SAHARA in detail in the following chapter.

how medicinal plants were traded, describing collectors and traders who act as middlemen. This analysis of collectors and traders lends itself to an understanding of how everyday practices and priorities for medicinal plants were shaped and how medicinal plants fit into the spectrum of livelihood strategies (discussed in Chapter 4) collectors engaged in. Collectors in Tirthan valley were both village people⁸² and Nepali migrants. As new employment opportunities became available to village people (highlighted in Chapter 4), traders increasingly relied on Nepali labour to fill their demands for medicinal plants. However, the morel mushroom (*Morchella esculenta*) (locally referred to as *gucchi*) was collected solely by resident village people irrespective of socio-economic status. If medicinal plants were collected by both resident villagers (local) and migrants (extra-local), what was local knowledge in this context? After the collector, came a series of traders who acted as middlemen. My aim was not only to understand the trader's position in the commodity chain, but also to question the use of stakeholder analysis to understand systems where one stakeholder wears many hats, thus blurring neatly organized stakeholder categories. I am then ready to examine how conservation and development interventions for medicinal plants took shape in Tirthan valley. Interventions in this case resulted from the desire to "alleviate poverty for rural women, while at the same time conserving valuable and endangered medicinal plant species", the GHNP director explained to me. I show how attempts to link conservation and development were played out, shedding light on the difficulties encountered by SAHARA in their efforts to reorient the commodity chain towards these goals. The question that guides this chapter is: how are global ideas such as conservation and development reproduced and reshaped?

5.1 Framing the Issue

Godoy and Bawa (1993) argue that dependence on NTFPs is associated with cultural isolation, lack of technology and capital, and poor access to markets. Availability of alternative income-earning opportunities, optimal use of labour and other resources, management of risk, and the balance between subsistence and income objectives, have been attributed to variances in NTFP use globally (Godey and Bawa 1993 cited

⁸² Again (as stated in Chapter Four), I realize that villagers are not a homogenous group, and in the following sections I will illustrate which villagers are involved with the trade and why.

in Arnold and Ruiz 1995). Arnold and Ruiz Perez (1995) explain that a distinction can be made between NTFP activities with lower points of entry that are predominantly in response to a lack of alternative employment, and which are likely to decline or disappear as other opportunities emerge, and those NTFP activities that are growing in response to an increase in market demand for the product. As

The complexity, variation and patterns of change in a wide variety of forest situations within which NTFP use takes place raise questions regarding likelihood that generalized models based on assumptions of deterministic and uni-directional change will have universal application (Arnold & Ruiz Perez 1995). To understand NTFPs and their role in meeting livelihoods requires knowledge of the dynamics of change in people's relationship to forest resources they rely upon (Arnold and Ruiz Perez 1995). Significant modifications in people's relationship to NTFP use are attributed to the growing presence of markets in their everyday lives. At the household level this is most often seen when balance between forest-based, agricultural and off-farm employment and income opportunities shifts (Falconer, 1995). Negative or limiting characteristics of particular NTFP activities include: marginal returns, increasing costs and declining returns, poor working conditions, volatile markets, a weak marketing position, exploitative patron/labourer relationships, and lack of access to inputs of capital or technology to overcome constraints of labour shortage or work stress. These barriers contribute to a household's decision to discontinue NTFP activities (Arnold and Ruiz Perez 1995).

5.2 Understanding the Trade and the Commodity Chain

Every April, the high altitude areas of Tirthan valley begin producing a range of herbs and grasses. In addition to being fodder for wild herbivores, this vegetation provides as many as fifty species of medicinal plants (Appendix F), which have become commercially important over the years. In temperate forests, just below high altitude lands, villagers collect morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculenta*). It was difficult to either obtain or develop an accurate profile of the medicinal plant trade because a significant proportion of it is considered illegal. In addition to this, Nepali migrants did a significant amount of the medicinal plant collection, and their presence in the area was not officially recorded and thus the activities they participated in, and their contribution to both rural and urban economy was

officially unknown. Himachal Pradesh Forest Department officials stated that approximately 2,500 tons of medicinal plants were exported out of the state every year legally. The legal annual trade of medicinal plants in Himachal Pradesh was believed to be worth about 100 million rupees. The state government received about 40 thousand rupees per annum through issuance of export permits for medicinal plant trade (Sharma, 2001). The trade of medicinal plants in India involves about 165 wild species and 24 of these medicinal plant species were found in Himachal Pradesh (Pandey & Wells 1997).⁸³

How do medicinal plants move from the collector to the market? Commodity chains form the skeleton of marketing systems for NTFPs. Raynolds (2004) points out that commodity networks are not static in time or space, but are continually constructed both ideologically and materially by individual and collective actors. Hopkins and Wallerstein (1986), explain that a commodity chains are ‘sets of inter-organizational networks clustered around one commodity or product, linking households, enterprises, and states to one another in the world-economy’ (cited in Gereffi *et al.* 1994:4). Taylor (2005) highlights that buyer driven commodity chains entail decentralized production and trading networks most often originating in the global South, and organized and largely controlled by large retailers, brand-name merchandisers and other international trading companies.

Edwards’s (1996) study of NTFPs marketed from Nepal to the medicine and essential oils industry in India reveals a marketing chain consisting of various levels – local collectors, village traders, road-head traders, larger traders, Indian wholesale and commission agents, and then Indian industrial units (as cited in Greene *et al* 2000). A number of collectors work through a village middle man to trade NTFPs. Road-head traders were important to collectors and village traders because they provided credit, storage, market information, and absorbed market risk. Nepali traders transported NTFPs to Indian wholesale and commission agents who sold them to industrial units. Edwards (1996) found that trade contributed \$8.6 million US dollars per year to Nepal’s national economy, a value six times that of Nepal’s official timber exports to India, and several hundred thousand

⁸³ I was able to find one reference to medicinal plants in the 1886 Anderson report. Anderson records that young girls in Kullu town were trying to sell banafsha (*Viola serpens*) to him. He also recorded that he observed the sale of *patish* (*Aconitum heterophyllum*) and *hat panja* (*Podopyllum*) in the local market. This does not mean there was not extensive use and trade of medicinal plants, but perhaps that it was not of significant interest to colonial officers. In this region timber was of utmost importance as highlighted in Chapter 2.

workers are supported, who depend on the trade for over 50% of their household income (*as cited* in Greene et al. 2000). Evertt's (1996) study of NTFP marketing in the Pacific Northwest gives some insight into the inefficiency of the marketing system. The system is controlled by urban-based, capital-intensive industrial units, which buy NTFPs from communities. Obstacles to effective marketing include waste and over-harvesting of products, conflicts and communication barriers between ethnic groups and institutions, and government's inability to adequately manage NTFP resources. My study of the medicinal plant trade in Tirthan valley also revealed that the medicinal plant trade is constrained by the lack of information on potential markets and marketing channels, the fragmented nature of the markets, the lack of sufficient volume and the unpredictability of the supply. Poor infrastructure and high transport costs to remote regions in the Himalayas were also a constraint.

Once outside of the valley where do the medicinal plants collected in Tirthan valley go? Two elder village men who were born and raised in the valley answered this question quite early on in my study. They explained that medicinal plants from Himachal Pradesh are transported to Amritsar (the capital of Punjab state). Until 1966, Kullu District fell within the boundaries of Punjab state. Trade relations with Punjab have remained strong, not only because of Kullu District's historical links to the state but also because the East India Company built a road from Manali (in Himachal Pradesh, north of Kullu) to Pathankot in Punjab, where the train station was located. This road and the connection to the network of trains allowed commodities to flow out of Kullu into Punjab and onwards with relative ease.

Conservation and development projects often work under the assumption that rural people were ignorant or unaware of the commodity chain associated with medicinal plants and the monetary value outside rural environments. Fairhead and Leach argue that:

Projects construct an 'ignorant peasant' who does not know the value of resources around them, and an 'intelligent project' which does. ...villagers may use these products, but are ignorant of their market value, thereby allocating projects a role in promoting commercialization (2001:10).

In Tirthan valley SAHARA and GHNP projects worked under the assumption that

villagers were entirely aware that these medicinal plant species were valuable, and that it was difficult for them to capture the full value because their position in the commodity chain leaves them powerless with no room to negotiate fair prices.

Local populations⁸⁴ were well aware of the fact that medicinal plants moved great distances from their point of origin, along a commodity chain, and that as they moved towards urban centres and beyond their value increased exponentially. An elderly village man, who himself had never been involved with the medicinal plant trade told me, “I know that once the plants leave the hands of the villagers the prices go up, and continue to do so as they are sold from one buyer to the next”. Village people were unaware of the prices at which the plants were sold to outside buyers, and shopkeepers themselves were unwilling to tell me anything more than the price at which they bought the plants from the collectors. In turn, local shopkeepers did not know the rate at which outside buyers sell to the buyers in Amritsar or abroad. In the following section I examine the individuals involved in the medicinal plant commodity chain, which in this study begins in Tirthan valley. I do this with the intention of understanding who collects and why, to show that new and different market mechanisms will not alter existing unequal power relations but instead provide yet another stage on which inequalities would be played out. When there is an unequal exchange and access to resources, ecologically unsustainable activities are more likely to be rationalised both socially and economically.

5.3 The Collectors: Migrants and Village Men

There are two groups of collectors in Tirthan valley, low-caste village men, whose families are economically the worst off in the valley, and male Nepali migrants. Medicinal plant collection is divided into the collection of high-altitude medicinal plants and the collection of morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculenta*), which are found at lower altitudes in surrounding temperate forests and agricultural fields. I begin by describing high-altitude plant collection, the people involved and their reasons for collecting medicinal plants, and then move on to describe morel mushroom collection and again provide an overview of collectors and how collection takes place. The

⁸⁴ Men and women living in Tirthan valley from all socio-economic backgrounds and castes.

purpose of this section is to create an understanding of how medicinal plants fit into livelihoods strategies of those who collect them. This then makes way for a discussion on medicinal plant traders who link collectors to external markets.

5.3.1 High Altitude Medicinal Plants

Until approximately 15 years ago, medicinal plant collection took place between August and November. However in recent years the demand for the medicinal plant species found in these Himalayan regions has grown substantially. To meet demands village people began collecting earlier in the year, starting as early as May. High-value medicinal plants were primarily located in what was previously Reserved Forest and is now GHNP. Because high-altitude medicinal plants were found in isolated areas located far from villages collection is carried out solely by men. As highlighted in Chapter 4, village women's priorities centred on addressing household needs; it was therefore necessary for them to be able to work close to their agriculture fields and return home to prepare the evening meal and collect water. Village men who collected medicinal plants explained to me that they:

“Hike up the mountains for hours to great heights; it sometimes takes two days to reach our destination. We carry our rations and bed-roll with us. We spend full days searching for and collecting medicinal plants until our rations are finished – usually seven to ten days at most. We sleep between rocks and boulders. We may go up as often as three to four times in the season.”

Upon return the plants were washed and dried in the sun, and then taken to the trader. Village people estimated that in three months they earned up to 10,000 rupees. Every village person I spoke with, collectors and non-collectors agreed that it is an incredibly laborious and time-consuming activity.

Medicinal plant collection provided a supplementary source of income for those living in the higher reaches of the mountains and those who have small agricultural fields or no land on which to grow cash crops – primarily lower caste villagers. It was observed that in general; medicinal plant collectors moved on to other wage earning opportunities once those become available (for example see Godoy & Bawa 1993; Dove 1993; Browder 1992). Men were gradually leaving Tirthan valley in search of employment in urban centres (see Chapter 4; see Pigg 1996), or decided

to cultivate apples and other cash crops (see Chapter 4). Regardless of whether or not village men were interested in participating in collecting medicinal plants, the demand for them was increasing.

The increasing national and global demand for medicinal plants, but lack of local interest in medicinal plant collection created a space for migrant workers. Nepali migrants have been coming to this region in search of opportunities for approximately 12 to 15 years and were gradually becoming the primary collectors of medicinal plants. The continued demand but decreasing interest from village men explained the lack of conflict around who can collect medicinal plants and who cannot. I was initially surprised that I did not observe or learn of any conflicts. Tek Ram, a low-caste village man who collected medicinal plants explained:

“No, there is no conflict, there is competition, and we want to collect as much as possible. This is why we now begin collecting earlier. But there are not many locals interested in collecting high altitude medicinal plants; it is very laborious and time consuming. Most people are now interested in agriculture and other young men leave the valley to try their luck in Chandigarh or Delhi. I am poor, I have little land and two young children, collecting plants is one option for me. It is mostly these Nepalis who collect and some villagers like me. My wife collects *gucchis*.”

In an interview Dilip, a young man from Nepal, he told me that he has been coming to this region for the last two years, and in November or December will return to Nepal. When he was not collecting medicinal plants he searched for opportunities in apple orchards where he collected apples, packed apple crates, and carried crates down to the road head. However these jobs were not readily available to migrant men - local village men were often employed in these positions. I asked him how he learned of the medicinal plant trade; he said that everyone knew about the trade. When he arrived in Kullu he approached a trader for work. The trader told him where to begin collecting and the price he was willing to pay for the plants. Dilip intended to move into other type of work eventually; he spoke of this interest in the tourism industry, perhaps as a guide, but as he did not speak English his options were limited in this line of work. Dilip is one of two sons and in a few years his younger brother will make the journey to Kullu District with him. Dilip managed to save approximately half his earnings, which he takes back with him to Nepal.

To date, research and development on NTFPs have focused on rural

communities (for example Butler, 1992), sustainable harvesting techniques (Peters 1994, 1996), markets (Clay 1992; Dwewees & Scherr, 1996), commercialization and marketing (Lintu 1995; Padoch 1992; Richards 1993), and biodiversity conservation (Freese 1997). Even studies that claim to take a “holistic approach” to the commercialization of NTFPs (Taylor *et al.* 1996) fail to consider migrant population's contribution to NTFP collection and trade. Arnold (2001) argues for greater recognition of the large number of often landless and poor people, which include migrants involved in collecting, processing and trading forest products in rural and peri-urban areas.

As I explained in the previous chapter, there is strong likelihood that eventually Nepali migrants will settle permanently in the valley and the district. They were primary medicinal plant collectors and they were attempting to diversify their income earning activities (for example apple harvesting and tourism). If migrant workers did eventually become permanent residents they would construct a range of forest resource use patterns that could have effects on household income and forest conditions of all other residents. Migrant population's use of forest resources also impacts conservation and development interventions planned for the commodity chain. If migrant populations were primary medicinal plant collectors however, they were not included in conservation and development initiatives, it is highly likely that efforts towards conservation and poverty would be met with limited success.

5.3.2 Morel Mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*)

In early March often saw women and children in forests surrounding their agricultural fields searching for morel mushrooms. In April and May, as the snowline recedes and new growth appears, groups of women begin to move deeper into the forest in their search for morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). An elder village woman recalled that:

“In the past it was possible to find plenty of *gucchis* in our own fields or along the road. They were used to make *sabji* [an Indian method to prepare vegetables]. *Gucchis* are very nutritious. However over the last 30 years people have stopped consuming them, they are only collected to sell”.

Some village people have eaten a morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*), curious to

know why they were so costly, “we were wondering why they were so costly, what is in the taste to make them so valuable”; however most will not even eat the smallest morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) in their eagerness to make a few *rupees*. Village people were told that these mushrooms were taken to Delhi where they were used to prepare meals in five star restaurants. I was told by a morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) buyer that, “they are also sent to Europe for pharmaceutical companies”. When I asked women about morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) trade the discussion was always very animated, they spoke excitedly about what they had collected that day or that week.

“The growth patterns of morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) are unpredictable”; villagers insisted that morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) grow in shady areas of temperate forests. The location of mushrooms varies from year to year, as Usha Devi explained, “it is a thing of luck; one year they may grow here, the next there. They have a very short life cycle. A patch empty of mushrooms one year, may be covered with them in another year”. The collection activity continued until every last mushroom was picked dried and sold. One village morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) trader explained, “some villagers, before drying the *guchhis*, slip little rocks into the stem of *gucchi* to increase its weight”⁸⁵. The rock sets within the stem of the *gucchi* making it difficult for a buyer or agent to detect.⁸⁶

A fair trade company, ‘Fruits of the Himalaya’, was interested in purchasing morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) from locals while also attempting to promote sustainable harvesting practices. The owners of this company, along with the GHNP, were intent on encouraging village people to cut morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) from where the stem meets the ground, as opposed to ripping the entire mushroom out of the ground - roots and all. The GHNP and the ‘Fruits of the Himalaya’ representatives were convinced that by leaving the root behind the mushroom would grow again in the same location the next year. When I asked village people their thoughts on the GHNP and ‘Fruits of Himalaya’ hypothesis, they replied that it “was absolutely absurd”. At a *panchayat* meeting I was told that morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) “do not grow in the same spot year after year; you can leave the root but it will just rot, better to take it”. In addition to this there were a

⁸⁵ *Gochis* are sold by weight

⁸⁶ *Gochis* are threaded together and then hung from the ceiling above the *tandoor* to slowly dry. They drastically decrease in weight once dried.

number of other factors that affected the extent of village people's acceptance of the GHNP lead initiative to cut morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*); for instance, a morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) value is determined by its weight and thus for village people it was important to collect as much of the mushroom as possible to increase its weight and hence value. Also the impracticality of cutting morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) as opposed to ripping them out of the ground was raised:

“We collect *guchhis* while we are collecting fire wood or grazing cattle, we are not going to carry scissors around and cut every *gucchi* we find. Who will buy us the scissors? It also takes more time to cut them, than to rip them out of the ground”.

Eventually the owners of ‘Fruits of the Himalaya’ came to the realization that they could not offer village people a price above what they were already receiving from local traders. April and May 2005 were exceptionally rainy humid months, which resulted in an abundance of morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*), and correspondingly this decreased the market price (which fluctuates depending on availability) to 3000 rupees per kilogram. Village people were most certainly benefitting from market opportunities available for this commodity, and were able to negotiate fair trade prices without the assistance of an intermediary such as an NGO or fair trade company like ‘Fruits of the Himalaya’.

Agents were sent to collect morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) from village people. An agent was a village man hired by a local shopkeeper to collect morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) from other village people, eliminating the need for village people to go to shopkeepers to sell their morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) – the shopkeepers essentially came to them. Initially I thought this would be disadvantageous for village people. How would they find the best price at which to sell? However, I eventually learned that all village men, women and even children knew the purchasing rate. The range in purchasing prices gradually spread throughout the valley, and village people discussed rates and prices amongst themselves. An agent would show up at a village or homestead at any time, day or night, to purchase morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). If the agent’s purchasing rate was considered satisfactory to the village person, the agent would weigh the morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) in the village man or woman’s home (on scales he

brought with him). I was interested to know why there was an organized system of agents to purchase morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) from village people, while there was none for other medicinal plants. One agent explained to me that morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) were collected only in the spring season (March until May), and everyone collects, so it was in the interest of the buyer to actively go out and purchase morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) rather than wait for people to come to him. While I was residing in Tirthan valley (2004/05) the rate for morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) was 3000 rupees/kilogram and the agent received a 10 per cent commission (or 300 rupees).

Morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) also provided valuable income for village women of all castes and economic strata. Women, and to a lesser extent children, were primary collectors of morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). To understand the gendered nature of collection I began asking questions about who traded the morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). It was difficult to generalize socio-economic aspects of morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) collection; women themselves would tell me that each household had its own method of keeping accounts. Ranjan's, a *Rajput* woman from Guruda village, household she kept the money from sales of morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) she collected, and her mother-in-law "did the same". When speaking to Ranjan and her mother-in-law, Verma Devi, I mentioned how some women give all their morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) to their husbands to sell. Both Ranjan and Verma Devi said that those women were uneducated and therefore did not have the confidence to sell their morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) themselves (Ranju completed her studies up to the 10th standard and left school once she married Tek Ram, Verma's son). I was visiting Ranjan when the agent came by her home to inquire if anyone in the family had morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) to sell. Verma was outside grazing cattle in a nearby field and told the agent that Ranjan may want to sell her morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). The agent went to their home and sat with Ranjan and Ranjan's brother-in-law (Nortem Singh). He weighed the morel mushroom (*Morchella esculanta*) and handed the payment to Nortem Singh who then passed it on to Ranjan. I found this transaction interesting in light of Ranjan's response to some of my questions about trade and selling of morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*), "Of course I sell my own morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). I collected them so I trade with the agent, and the money belongs to me for my expenses". I was

therefore expecting the transaction to be solely between the agent and Ranjan, without her brother-in-law, and the payment given directly to her. For Ranjan, being present at the sale of her morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) was being actively involved in the transaction. After the agent left I asked her why she sold her morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) so soon, when initially she was intending to wait until later in the season when price increased; “I have to attend my cousin’s wedding and will need to purchase a few things for the wedding, so I sold them now”, she replied.

Jindi, from Lubi village, left her home in the early morning, just as the sun was rising, to collect morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) and usually returned about two hours later to begin her daily household chores. Her husband worked as a daily wage labourer in the valley, taking whatever jobs he could find. He was rarely home (I saw him once during my time in the valley), leaving Jindi to make decisions regarding the buying and selling of morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*), among many other things. When an agent came to buy morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) from her, she called Gita over to us (another woman from the village). The four of us sat outside Jindi’s home, as the agent weighed the morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) and gave her the amount owing. I felt that this interaction was acceptable to other village men and women only because we (other women) were present. Frequently, village men often told me that buying and selling morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) and other medicinal plants is “not a job for women”. By coming to the villages, agents made the morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) market accessible to women who could not easily access traders in the bazaar. In Gita’s home all the morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) collected by her and her children were dried by her and then given to her husband who sold them to the agent. She was sometimes present, “to make tea”, but often she was busy with preparing dinner or busy with other tasks and took no interest in the trade between the agent and her husband.

Neema Devi’s husband worked for the Electricity Board and is stationed in a different district leaving her to run the household. On one occasion when the agent had come to purchase morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*), Neema Devi’s teenage son was present; however, the transaction was directly between Neema Devi and the agent. She sold her own morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*) and those of her daughter, Neema, and then gave Neema her share of the money. Neema Devi’s status in her village and the valley allowed her the personal liberty to trade directly

with the agent. She was a village elder; her family is by far the wealthiest in the village, and her husband did “service” - he had a government job, which to village people was quite impressive irrespective of the actual position. She had a large newly constructed home, her two daughters completed ‘Plus Two’ (class 12), and her son was intending to do a BA. She was the one person in the village who did not make *charus* (*Cannabis sativa*, here after referred to as cannibis). The other village women said that it was because she did not need the extra income, “she had a stack of money”.

In terms of division of labour, Nepalis collected high-altitude medicinal plants and not morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). I presume that if Nepalis began collecting morel mushrooms conflict between them and local collectors would quickly ensue. There was already a great deal of competition between local villagers for every available morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculanta*). If Nepalis were to also get into this trade, issues around resource rights and customary land use would surely arise.

5.4 Local Knowledge

How can the term local knowledge be applied in a context such as Tirthan valley, where ecological resources were not only utilised by locals but also extra locals? How do external interests in ecology shape knowledge? I ask these questions because in the medicinal plant commodity chain, the participation of Nepali migrants and traders was significant and yet they were labelled “outsiders” or extra local. Village men who collected medicinal plants often reiterated that Nepali migrants and traders lacked knowledge and awareness of sustainable harvesting practices for medicinal plants, and “their ignorance” resulted in overharvesting. Ram Chand, a medicinal plant collector, explained that:

“We are careful to leave enough plants behind so that they will grow again next year. We know about plant growth and how to harvest. It is these Nepalis who take all the plants, not thinking to leave any behind for next year’s growth. They know nothing about collection and it is their practices that have caused all these problems.”

To understand how knowledge on medicinal plant was shaped I asked people residing in the valley if they used medicinal plants in the home: “sometimes, mostly *chora*”, Gita said. To this I asked, “How do you collect *chora*?” “When someone is

going into the mountains to graze sheep or collect medicinal plants, we ask them to bring some *chora* back with them.” *Chora* (*Angelica glauca*) is chewed when one suffered from an unsettled stomach. There was no external market interest in this plant and therefore it was only utilised as a home remedy. If there were buyers interested in purchasing this plant I am certain its use in the home would drastically decrease and it would come up in conversations pertaining to medicinal plant collection, trade and markets.

When I asked a group of men, sitting at a local tea stall in the afternoon, if they could tell me which of the medicinal plants found in the valley were considered to be the most important, they replied using the botanical names as well as the local name of each high-value medicinal plant species, “*Taxus Baccata* (locally known as *rukhal*)⁸⁷, first and foremost, followed by *Picrorhiza kurro* (locally known as *karu*), and *Valeriana wallichiz* (locally known as *nihani*)”. I was surprised by village people’s familiarity with botanical names of plant species. I asked why these plants were considered important – “because they are costly, worth a great deal of money” was the reply. The importance of plants was ranked in order of potential income and their market price, as opposed to potential for health benefits. Village people’s knowledge of botanical names, particular properties, and use, resulted from interactions with traders. Bim Ram, a low-caste village man who collects medicinal plants occasionally, explained, “they use *taxus baccata* in those foreign medicines for cancer”. *Chora* (*Angelica glauca*) was the only plant used in the home, and interestingly village people did not know its botanical name. Only its “village name” is known, Gita told me. Local knowledge of medicinal plants in Himachal Pradesh was shaped, for the most part, by external interests.

How did migrant populations fit into programs integrating local knowledge and conventional science for resource management purposes? Can the knowledge of migrant groups be useful for management, given the short span of time of some migrant communities reside in an area? If this particular kind of knowledge was determined to be useful, as experience is held to be the root of local or traditional knowledge, was there a difference between the knowledge of migrant newcomers and

⁸⁷ In conversations local men and women almost always used the latin name *Taxus Baccata* for this plant, rarely the local name. In writing this chapter I use the latin name for this particular species with the local name in brackets, while other local names are used for all other plant species discussed (with the latin name in brackets). This is in keeping with how conversations were recorded.

those that have lived in the community for generations? Hornborg (2005) points out that indigenous knowledge is characterised by the structures of modernity that marginalized them. The space between local and extra-local systems of knowledge is not unbiased.⁸⁸ By creating a division between local and extra-local, the concept of indigenous knowledge blurs existing linkages between the two and may benefit bureaucratic authorities with an interest in the distinction - regardless of whether the interest is its maintenance or its demise.

While there are a number of studies analysing the extent and depth of local knowledge and practice of indigenous groups in comparison to conventional scientific resource management or knowledge (see for example Alcorn 1993; Berkes 1999; Huntington 2000; Stevenson 1996), far fewer studies have examined the local knowledge of non-indigenous groups such as migrants (see for example Davis & Wagner 2003; Mackinson 2001). In studies that do exist, migrant groups have been in the area or region for generations and dependent on local resources for their livelihoods. Fishing communities have provided examples of local knowledge resulting from experience observing, extracting, monitoring, and responding to changes in environment and species stocks. Managing fisheries from Sweden (Olsson & Folke, 2001) to Maine (McCay & Acheson 1987) to British Columbia (Mackinson 2001) to Brazil (Calherios *et al.*, 2000), local fishermen's knowledge of fish behaviour, environmental conditions, and population fluctuations has improved scientists understanding of the ecosystem and fisheries.

Migrant communities that rely on forests for timber and NTFPs have also provided examples of local knowledge that has informed conventional science (Coomes & Burt 2001; Endress *et al.* 2004). Livelihood dependence on natural resources and the ecosystem has been shown to result in extensive local knowledge in long-term resident communities. These long-term residents knowledge has also contributed to management practices that parallel and often enhance the conventional scientific knowledge of local government managers and scientists. Ballard and Huntsinger's (2006) study of Salal⁸⁹ harvesting in the Pacific Northwest examines if the livelihood dependence of short-term (seasonal or first generation) migrant

⁸⁸ The constructed division between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge is an example of what Foucault (1982) calls "dividing practices", referring to the many ways by which societies objectify the other and privilege the self (e.g. by distinguishing between mad and sane, sick, and healthy, criminals and law-abiding citizens) (p. 208).

⁸⁹ Salal is a shrub used in the multi-million dollar floral greens industry.

harvesters also results in extensive ecological knowledge. Their results suggest that harvesters are acutely aware of sustainable management of the resources upon which their livelihoods depend. It was found that they had intimate knowledge about timber management practices and how they affect understory species. Forest ecologist and land managers were surprised by these results. In a number of cases land managers assumed that harvesters either did not know about sustainable management practices and forest ecology or were not interested. This assumption led to them to blame any presumed over-exploitation of resources on harvester ignorance, further excluding harvesters from participating in management or research.

Nyhus *et al.* (2003) studied wildlife knowledge of migrant communities recently settled in Sumatra to evaluate conservation value of their local knowledge for protected area management. Their study found that there are vast differences in the quality and content of wildlife knowledge based on gender, age, years of residence in the area, and direct experience with the target species. In light of this finding Nyhus *et al.* (2003) recommend that managers and scientists carefully consider these variations when seeking to incorporate the knowledge of migrant and non-migrant groups into more conventional scientific and management activities. Li (2000:151) writes:

‘one of the risks that stem from the attention given to indigenous people is that some sites and situations in the countryside are privileged while others are overlooked, thus unnecessarily limiting the field within which coalitions could be formed and local agendas identified and supported.’

These risks are significant for populations that do not stay in one region their entire lifetime; and highlight the significance of place in conceptualizing the indigenous (Li 2001). Many scholars argue that there is a need to reconsider the neat divide between indigenous and non-indigenous to recognize the complex nature of knowledge creation. On the basis of his work with migrants in south-eastern Nicaragua, Nygren (1999) argues for the need to move away from separating local from universal knowledge and recognizing that knowledge is heterogeneous, negotiated, and hybrid.

5.5 Middlemen: Traders and Shopkeepers

Previously village men collected medicinal plants when there was a need to supplement their household income. Medicinal plants were collected to purchase

rations from shopkeepers in Banjar and Dolka. Shopkeepers explained how this system benefited both themselves and the village men. One shopkeeper recalled that:

“We started to buy medicinal plants because when villagers came to sell plants they would also buy rations for their household. Also there was a demand from traders outside the valley for medicinal plants”.

However, in this trade the shopkeeper profited a great deal more so than the villager. The medicinal plants were sold by village people at rates far below what the shopkeepers sold them to the outside trader.

While, there are agents for morel mushrooms (*Morcella esculenta*) trade who mediated between village people and shopkeepers, local agents were absent in the trade of high-value medicinal plants. What I did learn was that in recent years there were a growing number of agents for the sale of low-cost medicinal plants *dhoop* (*Jurinea dolomiaea*) and *banafsha* (*Viola serpens*). Like morel mushrooms (*Morcella esculenta*) agents, these people acted as brokers and connected shopkeepers to collectors; however, they did not perceive themselves to be agents. The position of morel mushroom (*Morcella esculenta*) agents was legitimised by the shopkeepers that hire them (these shopkeepers exert a great deal of influence and power within the local community), and by their sheer numbers. It was difficult to get an exact or even approximate number of agents as anyone can be hired, and shopkeepers did not have incentives to limit the number of agents because the agents were paid only on commission. Morel mushroom (*Morcella esculenta*) agents are local men who are familiar with the physical and social landscape of the region. Agents knew who collected morel mushrooms (*Morcella esculenta*) and who had larger quantities to sell.

Agents also opened up the market for those that could not easily access them, primarily village women. When I asked one man if he referred to himself as an agent – he collected *banafsha* (*Viola serpens*) and *dhoop* (*Jurinea macrocephala*) from village people to sell to local shopkeepers - he said that it was his business and he was not an agent. I was interested to learn how he did his work, to understand the difference between his position and that of the morel mushrooms (*Morcella esculenta*) agents. He told me that through friends and relatives he informed people that he was interested in buying any herbs available for sale. *Dhoop* (*Jurinea macrocephala*) and

banafsha (*Viola serpens*) were most readily available because they were found in lower altitudes and were relatively easy to collect. He purchased products available for sale from three villages, his natal village (he now lives with his wife and children in their *dogri*), and two neighbouring villages. He said, “I work in these villages because I have relatives who are from there”. He then sold what he had to the shopkeeper offering the highest rates, taking two per cent of this as his commission and using the rest to pay village people from whom he purchased the plants. Ultimately, he worked for himself collecting what was available whenever he felt the need and sold to shopkeepers offering the best price. He had significantly more independence in when and how he did his work and this is what he felt distinguished him from an agent. To do this type of work he required capital, while the morel mushroom (*Morcella esculenta*) agents did not. When I asked him why he did not deal with *karu* (*Picrorhiza kurro*) or *patish* (*Aconitum heterophyllum*), he told me that, “to trade in those plants one must have much more money; you only get a small percentage of the payment upon order from the buyers, about 30 per cent”. The balance was given when goods were received; therefore it was necessary for the middleman to have the capital required to pay collectors. These plants were high value and collectors expected larger returns. There was also a greater element of risk. If one did not have a long-standing relationship with the buyer, the buyer could possibly withhold payment for arbitrary reasons. He did not have the financial resources and social networks to handle any obstacles that may present themselves.

In Kullu District the primary buyer for all medicinal plants was Shankar Ram Sharma, who resided in Bhunter, (Appendix B) 10 km south of Kullu town and approximately 40 km from Tirthan Valley. Shankar Ram was an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and had a history of trade in forest products, primarily illegal timber. I made numerous attempts to meet with him at his residence in Bhunter but I was never able to arrange an appointment at a time or day convenient for him. I heard about him from many villagers in Tirthan valley, as almost all were aware of Shankar Ram Sharma and his involvement in the medicinal plant trade. Shankar Ram’s cousin, Sukanta, owned an electricity shop in Banjar. Sukanta’s wife is from Dolka (the main bazaar area in Tirthan valley), and he was originally from Kullu. After his marriage his father helped him set up the electricity shop in Banjar – selling light bulbs, light fixtures, electrical wires, etc. He owned a house in Banjar and purchased apple orchards in a neighbouring village. Sukanta hired men to collect

medicinal plants, which he sold exclusively to Shankar Ram, and morel mushrooms, which were sold to a number of different buyers from Amritsar. He was a difficult man to speak with and would not discuss his activities in the medicinal plant trade.⁹⁰ What I learned from the DFO was that Sukanta attempted to forge a forest guard's signature on a medicinal plant permit required to sell medicinal plants outside the valley (discussed in the following sections of this chapter).

Bharat, my landlord, was also involved in medicinal plant trade. He was relatively well off, owned large agriculture fields, a number of apple orchards, and had a small shop across from his home above which I lived. Although I was very well aware that he sold medicinal plants, he did not outright acknowledge his involvement in the trade. He was open about buying *guchhis* from villagers. Morel mushrooms (*Morchella esculenta*) grew throughout the valley inside and outside the GHNP. However, the other species he bought from collectors – *karu* (*Picrorhiza kurro*), *patish* (*Aconitum heterophyllum*), and *hat panja* (*Podophyllum hexandrum*) - were found almost exclusively in the GHNP area. He, like other shopkeepers, bought these medicinal plants from village people when they came to purchase items from his shop. *Rukul* (*Taxus baccata*) was the one plant species he stayed away from, primarily because it was the most expensive plant and was known widely to be an endangered species, and if caught trading this plant one was subject to severe penalties (Kesav Baba, who I speak of next, was the only person in Tirthan valley who traded *Taxus baccata* (*rukul*)). One day I happened to be returning from elsewhere while a buyer from Bhunter was picking up *karu* (*Picrorhiza kurro*), from Bharat. It was obvious that he did not want me to observe his dealings with the buyers. I asked buyers whom they worked for, they responded saying it was Shankar Ram Sharma, and that they often came to the valley to buy plants from shopkeepers. Bharat wanted to make it clear that he was not the only one selling medicinal plants: “all the shops in this valley, big and small, sell medicinal plants”.

Another well-known buyer of medicinal plants in the valley was Kesav Baba (a holy man, devotee of lord Shiva for nearly 40 years, who died in the last month of my field work). His shop was located at the road head. He had been trading medicinal

⁹⁰ Once, in the last few months of my fieldwork, I mentioned that I have a friend who may be interested in buying medicinal plants. This was the one time he stopped what he was doing, sat down in his chair, and showed interest in conversing with me, albeit briefly. I asked him if he could tell me the prices at which he was buying medicinal plants from the villagers and the rates he was selling medicinal plants to outside buyers. He gave me his contact information, telling me he would be interested in speaking directly with the buyer about rates.

plants for nearly 55 years. In August 2004, just a few weeks before I arrived to the valley, he was arrested for selling *Rukul* (*Taxus baccata*). He was sending six truckloads of *Rukul* (*Taxus baccata*) out of the valley: three were caught by the Forest Department and the other three truckloads were dumped into the Tirthan River on the Baba's orders. A shopkeeper who on occasion sold medicinal plants to Kesav Baba told me that the Baba often sent 'category one' plants with 'category two' – category one plants are banned and therefore it is illegal to collect and sell them. Often traders hide category one species with category two in order to get them past the forest guards. On many occasions Kesav Baba bribed forest guards to facilitate the movement of his medicinal plants out of the valley. The DFO told me that one of the forest guards who in the past had taken bribes from the Baba was dismissed. The DFO ended the conversation by telling me that I should stay away from Kesav Baba – “he was not a good man to hang around”.⁹¹

I became aware of the most prevalent system soon after arriving to the valley - traders from outside the valley bought plants from local shopkeepers who in turn bought from village people. However, a few months into my fieldwork I met Inder Singh from Uttaranchal (UA) (a neighbouring state). Inder Singh was living with a local family and hiring village people to help him search for *pin gucchi*,⁹² a medicinal plant that was found and collected for trade in UA. I was unaware that middlemen from neighbouring regions were coming into the valley to search for other high-value species. Inder Singh collected and traded medicinal plants from UA, and in 2004 he decided to travel to Kullu District in search of *pin gucchis*. He worked with buyers in Delhi who had orders for *pin gucchi* from Japan. He was very hesitant to speak to me about his interests in this plant, asking “who are you, a buyer?” I assured him repeatedly that I was a student simply interested in understanding the trade in medicinal plants and would not at any time be buying them. He did not want me to tell other villagers about this plant because if it was available in the valley he wanted to be the first one to get that year's harvest. When I saw him a few months later he told me that unfortunately he was not able to find any *pin gucchi* in this valley. I highlight this encounter to draw attention to the fact that the commodity chain is complex and by no means linear; there are many offshoots and one person in the chain may have multiple

⁹¹ I mention this encounter to give you an indication of the illicit nature of medicinal plant trade and people involved.

⁹² I was never able to find the scientific name for this plant.

roles.

5.6 Status and Interest in Medicinal Plants

When I made inquiries regarding the effectiveness of the GHNP in meeting goals for conservation of endangered and threatened species, Park officials readily informed me “the trade of medicinal plants has declined”. However, I felt it was very difficult to answer such a question with any degree of accuracy. Many people who used to collect medicinal plants said that they had stopped because permits were no longer given to collect within the GHNP. Shopkeepers told me that a few years ago “truckloads of plants would leave the valley, [but] now you do not see even half of what you used to”. I noticed that the trade was becoming increasingly secretive. When I first came to the valley people hesitantly told me about their role in the medicinal plant trade, either as a collector or buyer. A year later I found it much more difficult to speak with the same shopkeepers about activities around medicinal plant trade. This may have been because the number of shopkeepers fined by the Forest Department for trading medicinal plants had increased substantially that year. The Forest Department and the GHNP had become vigilant in keeping track of who purchased medicinal plants and what types of plant species they purchased. On one occasion while I was interviewing the GHNP Director he mentioned that his informants (local village people) throughout the valley were keeping track of the activities of village people identified as “involved in suspicious activities”. I was utterly surprised to hear that the GHNP had informants in the valley. I was not at any time under the impression that village people were being monitored and their activities potentially recorded. In my many encounters with village people not once did anyone refer to GHNP or Forest Department informants. However, in retrospect perhaps I was also thought to be an informant for the GHNP. One of the shopkeepers I spoke with on numerous occasions about daily events would always end the conversation when I tried to ask about his involvement in the medicinal plant trade. A few months into my fieldwork, a village woman I got to know well told me that the shopkeeper was in trouble with the Forest Department; he had been fined for purchasing endangered plant species most probably obtained from the GHNP.

There were factors other than the formation of the GHNP that were affecting the collection of medicinal plants. As I mentioned in the first section of this chapter, it

is a difficult task, time consuming and physically demanding. The shift in rural priorities, from subsistence crops to cash crops, was raising the annual household income. Even a small apple orchard allowed a one to earn approximately 9,000 rupees a season. Cash crops provided an income that is relatively more stable than medicinal plant collection. Young men were also leaving the valley in search for opportunities available in the booming tourism industry. As discussed in Chapter 4, young people were also opting to leave the valley to be educated in Kullu (town) and Shimla with the hope of finding employment with a government agency or in a factory.

Medicinal plant trade connected village people with national and international pharmaceutical companies; however, the first link in the plant trade consisted of village men who double up as shopkeepers. While ‘stakeholder analysis’ puts ‘villagers’ and ‘traders’ in neat separate categories, the situation on the ground was characterised by messy continuities and practices, which were not easy to explain or demarcate. Pluralism is a possible framework with which to analyse these types of contexts because it acknowledges multi-stakeholder situations and environments where one stakeholder wears multiple hats. However, the understanding of the philosophical, political, or sociological ramifications of pluralism differs widely, thus leading to the ensuing debate on whether pluralism is a ‘slippery middle ground between relativism and absolutism’ (Kekes 1993). In forestry and rural development, ‘pluralism refers to situations where a number of autonomous and independent groups with fundamentally different values, perceptions, and objectives demand a role in decision-making about natural resource management outcomes’ (Anderson *et al.* 1998:172). The medicinal plant commodity chain was multifaceted and establishing ties between end consumers and producers was difficult because chains involve a number of stakeholders, many stages of processing, and multiple changes in product ownership (Lawrence 2002:101).

The GHNP had the legitimacy and resources to persuade, power to choose the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of stakeholders, and the authority to define the reason or theme around which stakeholder analysis took place (Grimble & Wellard 1996), while stakeholder interests were primarily centred on having a voice in decision making processes. Having a voice and being noticed, in turn, are associated with power and legitimacy (Mithell *et al.* 1997). As Foucault (1978) pointed out, power has much to do with position and the particular ‘imbrications of men and things’ as with formal powers people may or may not hold.

5.7 Conservation by Commercialization

Linking conservation and development initiatives through markets or by introducing capitalist institutions into village life has proven to be ineffective in achieving desired results. Yet this approach has been applied to the design and implementation of conservation projects worldwide. Here I discuss how SAHARA is attempting conservation and development by reorienting the commodity chain, to do this they relied on market based conservation interventions.

As I stated earlier in this chapter, in Tirthan valley conservation and development efforts were organized around the conservation of endangered medicinal plant species. On numerous occasions the GHNP Director explained to me that “on the IUCN Red List, one of the medicinal plants located in the GHNP is listed as endangered, and four of the plants are listed as vulnerable”. This list proved to be the GHNP Directors rationale for pushing forward with the conservation agenda. The Red List resulted from global attention and interest in biodiversity conservation. Among the various criteria adopted in the process of red-listing is the ecological status of taxa, as reflected by the reduction in population’s size and geographical distribution over time (Walter & Gillett 1997). The list includes categories such as extinct, existing in the wild, threatened, endangered and vulnerable (Walter and Gillet 1997). Following the criteria adopted by the IUCN, a number of country-specific red lists have been prepared.⁹³ However, such lists are not necessarily prioritized around diversity. In Arvind *et al.*’s (2005) study of the red list and non-red list species in the Western Ghats they find that while red list species may be useful in understanding anticipated threats of market demands, it is also necessary to quantitatively assess threats to species diversity through field data on distribution and demographic profile. Fairhead and Leach (2001) explain that species lists are developed around the understanding of:

- a) the ‘practices of the taxonomist-collector (locating new plants, interaction with metropolitan plant collections to establish the classification, coupled to the cult of naming in recognition of the finder), b) the practices then used to define ecosystems (via plant communities-phytosociology), and, c) the practices of inventory for determining the ‘economic value’ of a forest. (2001:6).

⁹³ For example Nayer and Sastry 1987, 1988, 1990, Ved and Utkarash 2001, Briggs and Leigh 1988, Ravikumar and Ved, 2000, Gardenfors, 2001.

Medicinal plants have become valuable to science because they are rare, unknown and endangered (see Fairhead & Leach 2002). The value of these plants to scientists, village people, traders, forest department officials is not the medicinal plant per se, although its commoditisation might lead us to think so, instead it is the value produced by a set of social relations of production.

The GHNP was working with SAHARA to conserve endangered Himalayan medicinal plant species by creating MPPAs, which were plots of land registered under the WSCGs.⁹⁴ The land that MPPAs were developed on belonged to the Forest Department; however, the Forest Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WSCG, giving WSCG ownership of all medicinal plants grown on the land, but not the land itself. In these MPPAs SAHARA attempted to cultivate high-value medicinal plants.

The Forest Department and the GHNP were under the impression that the market for medicinal plants was increasing, and therefore felt that there was a need for projects that focused on the cultivation and conservation of medicinal plants while also responding to village people's interest in this market. The development component of this project was shaped around the belief that by eliminating middlemen, collectors would be able to access higher rates of compensation for the medicinal plants they collected. The MPPA project was developed with the intention of linking village people to markets in cities such as Delhi and Chandigarh. The GHNP Director was instrumental in developing the MPPA idea; he acquired funds from the National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB)⁹⁵ and then passed the project down to SAHARA. MPPAs were to be one hectare in size, with 22,500 medicinal plants in each propagation area (primarily *karu* (*Picrorhiza kurro*), *nihani* (*Valeriana wallichii*), *patish* (*Aconitum heterophyllum*), and *shingli mingli* (*Dioscoria deltoidea*), all high-value medicinal plants), and where possible the areas would eventually be extended in area and the number plants it contained. SAHARA was able to create 90 MPPAs throughout Tirthan valley with their WSCGs.

Once the plants were harvested the next step for SAHARA was to develop a marketing strategy. Approximately 68 of the 90 MPPAs were due for harvest in 2006:

⁹⁴ WSCG are discussed in Chapter Six..

⁹⁵ The National Medicinal Plants Board was set up under a Government Resolution (No. Z.18020/19/97-M.P.Cell) notified on 24th November 2000 under the Chairpersonship of Union Health & Family Welfare Minister. NMPB is a mechanism for coordination and implementation of policies relating to medicinal plants both at the Central and State levels

the initial 22,500 plants were to remain in the MPPA and the surplus to be removed.⁹⁶ However once the medicinal plants were collected, it was unclear how local village people would be linked directly to external markets, sidestepping the middlemen entirely. In terms of the role of a middleman there were four things to keep in mind, firstly they were able to provide large quantities of medicinal plants required to meet buyer's demands (in tons as opposed to kilos); secondly they have resources to transport the plants from one destination to another, and facilities to maintain the quality of the product (i.e. refrigeration); thirdly they have established relationships with external buyers, some of which extend back many generations; and finally they have the capital necessary to make investments. Thus the proposal to eliminate middlemen entirely from the commodity chain was by no means simple; instead it was fraught with difficult challenges for a small NGO with limited experience. To learn more about SAHARA's marketing strategy I spoke with Chini Lal. A resident of Tirthan valley and a friend and neighbour of the SAHARA Director, Chini Lal was asked to assist with the marketing of medicinal plants. He was brought into the NGO primarily because the MPPA coordinator had neither the time nor the knowledge to progress with marketing. Chini Lal developed marketing workshops that were delivered to SAHARA WCSGs in December 2004.

One woman from each WSCG joined a marketing cluster, with one cluster for each *panchayat*. Women in each cluster were responsible for procuring medicinal plants from their WSCG MPPAs. After medicinal plants were collected at the cluster level (this amount was yet to be determined) women in each cluster notified SAHARA and arranged a time and place for SAHARA to pick up the medicinal plants. SAHARA was responsible for processing, preserving and branding medicinal plants, in addition to finding potential retail or wholesale sales outlets.

Once Chini Lal had presented his marketing strategy to the WSCG he asked members if they had any questions. The members of the WSCG did not have questions about the marketing strategy and said pragmatically, "we will see when we have medicinal plants to sell". After these workshops, whenever I ran into Chini Lal I inquired about the clusters and if he felt marketing activities were progressing to his

⁹⁶ This timeline for harvesting was made on the assumption that the plants mature in approximately four years. I often wondered how four years for maturity was determined. When I asked SAHARA staff they informed me that the GHNP Director told them in three to four years' time the MPPAs are to be harvested. I then asked the GHNP Director and he told me that he was given this information from National Medicinal Plant Board. It was interesting to me that no one thought to ask medicinal plant collectors when plants would be considered mature.

satisfaction. He often started his reply by telling me that I should find buyers for them in Canada (this would require permits and fees that, as of yet, they do not have the capacity to handle), and that marketing aspects were moving slower than anticipated because at present there was very little produce to sell, “really these women are not interested in medicinal plants”. It was difficult for women to wholeheartedly commit to working on the MPPAs, these types of initiatives demand a great deal of women’s time and labour which, as illustrated in Chapter 4, was in short supply after women completed the number of households tasks that fell on their shoulders. SAHARA has been unable to convince, and more importantly show, women benefits that could result from their investment.

If village people had straightforward and direct access to external markets, a large number of them would already be trading without the use of middlemen. Another consideration was that village people were gradually leaving the medicinal plant trade as new opportunities arose. Migrant men and extremely poor village people were primary medicinal plant collectors. However, they were not involved in any aspects of conservation and development initiatives promoted in Tirthan valley. Without including primary collectors in the process it will be difficult to address over-harvesting of endangered medicinal plant species, the key conservation issue around which GHNP was attempting to organize its efforts. The combination of medicinal plant conservation and economic development resulting from medicinal plant markets heralded significant interest from the international donor and NGO community; however it is a complex process, with mixed results. In Tirthan valley the MPPA project had yet to produce tangible benefits for key stakeholders.

Peters (*et al.* 1989) ground-breaking study brought NTFPs to the forefront (Crook 1998). This study proposed that over a long time horizon the ‘potential value of potential value of sustainable exploitation of non-timber forest resources in an area near Iquitos, Peru, went two or three times beyond the value resulting from forest conversion’ (Crook 1998). Following Peters (*et al.* 1989) line of thought Schwartzman (1989) and Hecht (1992) ‘determined that collecting Brazil nuts and latex in an extractive reserve in Brazil provided collectors with better economic returns on their labour’ (Crook 1998). Another study found that medicinal plant products in Belize resulted in a value approximately ten times that of land cleared and used for intensive agriculture (Panayatou and Ashton 1992). Balick and Mendelsohn (1992) study also

found that medicinal plant collection could potentially surpass the value of other uses (Crooks 1998).

Following Peters and his colleagues study on NTFPs there was much dispute about the economic viability of NTFP collecting activities (Crooks 1998). Criticism's for the study, highlighted by Crooks (1998) are as follows:

First, the study estimates the potential value earned on commodities in the isolated, and hence abnormally strong, major urban markets of Iquitos (Browder 1992; Southgate & Clark 1993); second, the study assumes no post-harvest losses by using a long planning horizon of 50 years and a discount rate of only five per cent (Browder 1992); third, the study neglects to account for the price impact that would result if there is a major increase in extractive activities (Southgate & Clark 1993); and finally, the study assumes that all products available in the forest can be marketed (Coomes 1996).

Research focused on potential for NTFP extraction activities to generate viable sources of income for rural populations were critiqued for their assumption that people collecting would benefit at the same rates that consumers purchase the product, rather than determining the income earned on the conservative rates that rural collectors earn once the 'middlemen' have taken their share (Coomes 1996 cited in Crooks 1998). SAHARA was becoming increasingly aware that to derive maximum profits from MPPA plants, prior to sale there must be a process to add value, either through processing or certification (fair trade or organic). While they identified some key elements to increase the share of benefits obtained from existing markets, they lacked funds, knowledge and experience to progress further.

'Ultimately, of a number of forest use activities, extraction of NTFPs yields some of the lowest gross returns per hectare, and the income earned from NTFPs extractive activities is often insufficient to meet subsistence requirements completely (Hedge *et al.* 1996)' (as cited in Crooks 1998). The obstacles associated with NTFP collection can result in over-exploitation and to 'manipulate the forest ecosystem to increase profitability' (Crooks 1998). NTFP collection is commonly tied to a boom-bust cycle, which is driven by external market requirements (Crook 1998). A collector usually benefits only during a brief period of the boom due to rapid depletion of the resource, and income earned from collecting activities can vary considerably (Coomes 1995).

Fundamentally the MPPA project was about changing the practices of people

in order to meet the end goal of conservation. It was about reorienting the commodity-based system to conserve biological diversity. Practices around medicinal plant collection and trade were to be curtailed so that village people, whose collection practices were considered a threat to biodiversity, could engage in practices endorsed by conservation biologists and development practitioners as environmentally sound while furthering goals for economic development. Instead of applying practices that have a tendency to exclude groups to achieve goals, a common premise in previous conservation models, this type of conservation incorporated economic development as the central method for achieving biodiversity conservation globally (Schroeder 1995:327).

Michael Dove (1993) has argued that claiming deforestation can be 'solved', by 'helping' people shift from detrimental forest use practices to forest-based systems of commodity production, supports the rhetoric that 'helps to structure perceptions of tropical deforestation as a problem of the poor forest-dwellers' (Dove 1993:17). He also argues that the proposal to develop NTFPs to help forest people meet their cash and development needs is 'at odds with the historical development of such products' and that these types of 'initiatives are frequently carried out at the expense of village residents (Dove 1993:17). As I have shown in the outset of the chapter, powerful people at the core of the medicinal plant trade have already found ways to move medicinal plants out of the periphery and into mainstream national and global markets. Thus market-based conservation, although an interesting approach, does not remove unequal power relations. Such systems provide another field for inequalities to be played out; under conditions of unequal exchange and access to resources, ecologically unsustainable activities are more likely to be socially and economically acceptable.

5.8 Conclusions

Peet and Watts (1993) argue that the inability of market-oriented conservation strategies to recognize crucial failures in governance and civil society can be seen as an example of 'market triumphalism'. In these types of conditions, relying on markets to provide a blanket solution to complex socio-ecological issues is likely to result in negative impacts on biological diversity (Mahanty 2002).

In this chapter I have explained the commodity chain for medicinal plants in Tirthan valley. From here I move on to explore conservation and development interests in medicinal plants and the commodity chain, discussing efforts to intervene in the current system of trade to introduce and achieve goals for ‘conservation through commercialization’. I highlight the multiple factors at play that ultimately influence the success of such initiatives. In the following chapter I move forward with the topic of conservation by examining the mechanism through which goals for conservation and development are carried out and success is achieved. The intention of the next chapter is to explore how representations are maintained and reproduced, borrowing Lewis and Mosses’ (2006) term ‘brokers and translators’.

CHAPTER 6 BROKERING ECODEVELOPMENT SUCCESS

Global interest in promoting local participation in resource management and international agencies' aspirations to connect conservations goals to socio-economic development resulted in the integrated conservation and development approach (Hughes and Flintan, 2001). Integrated conservation and development programmes (ICDP) typically traverse a wide range of actors, geographies, scales of land and resource use, and institutional contexts. This chapter explores how a conservation and development project centred on medicinal plants (introduced in the previous chapter) is brokered through a series of actors. It examines how relationships and networks between actors involved can influence project success.

Understanding of community-based resource management has grown substantially because of the extensive amount of research now available on resource management and interconnected topics such as common property and community development. Mahanty (2002) highlights that:

the common property resource literature argues that given appropriate institutional structures, and suitable socio-economic and biological conditions, local resource management systems have sustainably managed common pool resources over generations (for example, Alcorn 1995; Arnold & Stewart 1991; Berkes 1991; Berkes & Farver 1989; Ostrom 1999)'.

Mahanty (2002) goes on to suggest that:

community development and participatory resource management literature suggests that an emphasis on participation goes only so far in promoting equitable resource management, and that issues of power, institutions, internal differentiation and conflicts within communities must be considered (Chambers 1994; Gujit 1996; Gujit & Kual Shah 1998; Mosse 1994).

Understanding the range of actors involved in resource management and conservation, their relationships with each other and with existing institutional structures in place to facilitate governance has not been a priority in biodiversity conservation research, outside of recommendations to gradually 'scale up' from local initiatives (see Hughes & Fintan 2001). Here my intention is to understand how conservation and development success is produced by an assortment of actors, from NGO staff, to local women, to government officials. Actor-oriented research suggests that the process of negotiation, which involves dialogue and bargaining

between actors, has a hand shaping the future of interventions (see Long (1997) for an overview of actor-oriented research). The actor-network theory (ANT) suggests that an established network of actors have a role in interventions related to conservation and development (Latour 1999; Murdoch 1997, 2000). While ANT draws attention to network characteristics, the actor-oriented approach focuses on the characteristics of social actors and relationships between them. Lewis and Mosse's research (2006) moves forward with ANT to draw attention to 'brokers and translators' of projects for development. In their analysis they take the focus away from how actors work within existing frameworks of development to draw attention to how 'development projects – always unforeseeable – become real through the work of generating and translating interests, creating context by tying in supporters and so sustaining interpretations' (Mosse 2005 cited in Lewis & Mosse 2006:13). This understanding of project intermediaries, supplied by Lewis and Mosse (2006), guides my discussion of how conservation and development success is brokered for the GHNP ecodevelopment project in Tirthan valley.

In this chapter I examine the GHNP ecodevelopment project to understand how intermediary actors maintain disjuncture between policy and practice. I first introduce the ICDP concept and then explain the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP) to show that ecodevelopment was a product of donor interests in ICDP. This leads me to the following section in which I examine how village people residing in Tirthan valley received conservation and ecodevelopment. Ecodevelopment was an outcome of international interest in addressing problems that arise from narrowly defined conservation initiatives. I proceed to unpack the idea of ecodevelopment and its characteristics through discussions with a number of actors, and learn that the practice of conservation and development as it is associated with ecodevelopment resulted in many unspoken negotiations between actors. These actors ultimately collaborated to create an account of community and conservation that legitimized some people's and group's interests while suppressing others.

The crux of this chapter lies in the sections that follow, where I show that in Tirthan valley the relationship between conservation policy and village people's interests were negotiated by a series of actors. I first highlight theoretical issues, clarifying and defining key terms that will be used in my discussion. I then

introduce the various brokers⁹⁷ who exist in the space between the GHNP and village residents. In doing this I show that brokers require specific capabilities and characteristics. I examine the work brokers do to firmly hold representations of identities and practices in place while also allowing some room for actors to manoeuvre through the world of conservation and development (Lewis & Mosse 2006:15). I rely on Mosses' (2005: 157-183) discussion of 'the social production of development success' to develop my understanding of how success is created and maintained in the GHNP ecodevelopment project.

I explore how interpretations are made and persist in conservation and development project to produce success. To do this I move forward with Bierschenk's and his colleagues work (2002) in which they illustrate how brokerage is necessary for order and "success" and provides key actors continued access to funds. I also rely on Lewis and Mosses' 2006 research in *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies* in which they explain that 'brokers deal in people and information....but more broadly in the maintenance of coherent representations of social realities and in the shaping of their own social identities' (2006:16). My intention in this chapter is to link rural experiences (described in Chapter 4) with the movement of medicinal plants from a village onwards (discussed in Chapter 5) to the policy discourses that move with them.

6.1 Integrated Conservation and Development: Background

In the early 1980s, after a number of meetings between United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the IUCN⁹⁸, the idea of applying western conservation practices abroad was scrutinized internationally (Oates 1999:47). Activists and practitioners argued that conservation projects were unsuccessful because local people living on the periphery and just beyond the protected areas did not recognize these new park boundaries. Local populations were unwilling, and in many cases unable, to change or modify their resource use to be mindful of boundaries that were restricting access to areas that were vital for their subsistence practices. The result of this was tensions and conflict between actors that

⁹⁷ I borrow the term broker from Lewis and Mosse (2006)

⁹⁸ IUCN was established in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment.

supported the development of protected areas and local populations who required these areas for survival (Wells *et al.* 1992:ix). With the recognition that western principles for conservation cannot be blindly applied to vastly different socio-cultural landscapes that exist internationally in the developing world, discussion concerning rural people and their impact on biological diversity became popular in conservation rhetoric.

ICDP was a response to the growing critique of international conservation. With the creation of ICDPs it was believed that priorities to conserve biological diversity would be tied to small-scale economic development projects intended to benefit local landholders and resource users (Sachs 1993; Smith *et al.* 2000). The ICDP concept, although it existed in practice to a small extent before becoming formalised as a program (Bonner 1993:253-270), was discussed widely after a January 1992 World Bank publication. This publication was instrumental in bringing forward the idea that when local populations are excluded from protected area development and management; they are a threat to these areas (Wells *et al.* 1992; Brown & Wyckoff-Baird 1992). The perception that ICDPs were an innovative approach to conservation because they included local population's livelihood priorities became firmly rooted in bureaucracy when World Bank, US Agency for International Development (USAID) and WWF funded a team to study twenty-three conservation projects.

The researchers involved with this study argued that their objective was to examine the potential for social and economic development within protected areas, and promote the concept (Brandon & Wells 1992; Wells *et al.* 1992). This supposedly new approach to conservation was believed to be a progressive take on current methods of delivering conservation objectives. The initial assessment of ICDPs identified a number of areas where conservationists could attempt to couple conservation and economic benefit (Westermarck 1997). These included 'natural resource management outside protected areas', 'community social services', 'nature tourism', 'road construction for market access', and 'direct employment generations' (Wells *et al.* 1992).

The ICDP concept is not developed around one particular model, instead it is an approach to conservation that provides incentives, alternatives, and in some cases compensation for resource use surrender by resources-dependent communities neighbouring protected areas (Wells *et al.* 1999). By developing

alternative livelihood strategies, such as the MPPAs (that I have explained in Chapter 5 and will elaborate on in later sections of this chapter) ICDPs in Tirthan valley attempted to reconcile the management of protected areas with the social and economic needs of neighbouring communities (Wells *et al.* 1992). It was believed that this approach to conservation was necessary to overcome inequities and ineffectiveness that had come to characterize parks in the developing world (Stankey 1989).

6.2 From ICDPs to India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP)

The IEP is similar to ICDP in that it was developed around the conviction that goals for biodiversity conservation can be achieved by providing local populations economic incentives and alternatives to utilizing resources located within a national park. IEP primary goal is to reduce the losses local populations suffer when their resource use is curtailed by conservation related initiatives. IEP intends to provide these populations a range of income-generating and resource substitution activities. In Tirthan valley IEP goals were to reduce the number of middlemen in the medicinal plant commodity chain, thereby shortening the chain, and allowing village collectors better access to medicinal plant markets.

Advocates and supporters of eco-development claim that it avoids taking a ‘blueprint approach’ to project design and implementation by emphasizing participation through consultation, a key feature in the ICDP approach (World Bank 1996 as cited in Sanghamitra 2002). The planning and implementation of the IEP took almost a decade, with an assortment of actors involved at different project stages.

Regardless of its participatory approach, and emphasis on economic development opportunities for local populations, the IEP was criticized because it did not consider broader questions around legislation and the rights of residents and neighbouring communities’ access to Park resources (Agarwal *et al.* 1999; Karlsson 1999; Kharae 1998; Kothari *et al.* 1995). Analysts also raised concerns related to the limited success eco-development had in understanding and thus addressing the complexities of facilitating participation with such a diverse range of stakeholders (Mahanty 2002). In light of the apprehensions raised in previous research on eco-development, in this chapter I examine how the GHNP

ecodevelopment success was translated and brokered through a series of actors and mediators.

6.3 Conservancy in Tirthan Valley: The early years

In this section I provide a timeline of sorts, one that takes us from early interests in conservation to present-day ecodevelopment and the GHNP. To do this I rely on Garson, Gaston and Hunter's (1983) earlier work in Kullu District, and Baviskar's (2003), Pandey and Wells' (1997) and Pandey's (1998) analysis of the GHNP and ecodevelopment. Baviskar (1983) notes that by the 1960s, with the gradual increase in deforestation, growing population, and development of regional infrastructure, Tirthan valley and the surrounding valleys were experiencing environmental stress. While resource use in Tirthan valley was under increasing scrutiny, 'Indian political leadership began to take an active interest in environmental movements of the West' (Baviskar 2003: 272). The consequence of the Indian government's keen attention to western interests in the environment was the Wildlife Protection Act in 1972 (Baviskar 2003). This Act made way for government representatives to declare ecologically sensitive areas as either National Parks or Wildlife Sanctuaries (Pandey & Wells 1997). The Act was developed in likeness to the USA model of conservation through national parks (Baviskar 2003). Nuemann ((1998: 272) cited in Baviskar 2003:272) explains that this model was developed on the premise 'that "nature" can be preserved' from the effects of human agency by legislatively creating a bounded space for nature controlled by a centralised bureaucratic authority'.

In 1976, the government of Himachal Pradesh announced the creation of Tirthan Wildlife Sanctuary, which encompasses 8376 hectares of valley land (Baviskar 2003; Pandey 2008). Then in 1980 the government of Himachal Pradesh, with the support of international agencies and NGOs, initiated the Himachal Pradesh Wildlife Project (Baviskar 2003). The purpose of this project was to understand wildlife conditions in the Himachal Pradesh. Gaston (*et al.* 1983) carried out an abbreviated survey of wildlife in the reserved forest of Kullu for the Himachal Pradesh Wildlife Project. The findings from this survey, and recommendations thereafter, led to the initial notification issued in 1984 that outlined interest in creating the GHNP (Pandey & Wells 1997, Pandey 1998).

While the 1983 study by Gaston and his collaborators provided insight into the biological diversity of the area, it did not provide any consideration of local population's resource use and requirements within the area that was to be declared GHNP (Baviskar 2003). The study was lacking in information on the extent of human and livestock pressure on the area, and lacked data on the extent people depended on forested areas for their livelihoods. Nevertheless a management plan was developed in 1987 to guide management of the GHNP for the initial 10-year period (Baviskar 2003, Pandey & Wells 1997, Pandey 2008). This plan was developed on the hypothesis that the human population's livelihood related activities were resulting in significant degradation and destruction of critical habitats (Baviskar 2003, Pandey & Wells 1997, Pandey 2008). The management plan proposed that there was a need for different sources of employment and income for residents who relinquished their traditional resource use (Baviskar 2003).

Upon reviewing the findings of the Himachal Pradesh Wildlife Project scientists, government administration relied on the Wildlife Act to make decisions on how best to proceed forward. The Wildlife Act primary focus was on biodiversity conservation and in this vein would only allow human use of biodiversity within the park if authorised by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state (Baviskar 2003). Authorization to use or remove biodiversity from the GHNP would only be granted when it was necessary to better manage wildlife within the park. Essentially with the implementation of this Act the only activities allowable in the GHNP area were either scientific research or tourism (Baviskar 2003, Pandey and Wells 1997). To enact this new law the Forest Department would have to first acquire rights from the state, and the state would have to compensate residents for curtailing their rights and access to resources. Transferring resource rights to the Forest Department would have been significantly less cumbersome in the absence of the 1886 Anderson Settlement report (as explained in Chapter 2) (Baviskar 2003). The Anderson Settlement report, which had never been modified, provided a complete and detailed listing of every village resident's rights, this left very little, if any "grey area" in terms of who had what right. Unlike other parts of India, village people in Tirthan valley were very well aware of their resource rights, and referred to the Anderson Report when they felt they are being subjected to demands that they considered unacceptable (my personal observations and also

noted by Baviskar (2003)).

The social, cultural and economic landscape in 1886, when the rights were originally recorded, obviously differs quite dramatically from the current scenario. Chapter 4 and 5 of this dissertation drew attention to village people's interest in a monetised economy and as a result changing priorities around land and resources use. Cash crops now provide a significant source of income to village families and the increasing number of roads in the region and in the valley allows people to move in and out of the areas with relative ease.

To settle resource claims with the hundreds of village people that have rights under the 1886 Anderson Report would be a long and arduous process that could take many years. Government officials would either be required to identify alternative areas that village people could use meet their livelihood requirements, or provide impacted people and household's monetary compensation for their loss of rights (Baviskar 2003). Both processes – compensation or finding suitable alternatives would be time consuming, incredibly complicated, and would be at great financial and social cost (Baviskar 2003)⁹⁹. Conservation scientists presented ecodevelopment as an alternative to settling resource claims with village people and as a potential remedy to tense relations that have existed historically between forest officials and village people (Baviskar 2003, Pandey 1998). The Ecodevelopment approach seemed straightforward, with its mandate to identify and invest in alternative sources of income that over time move people away from using the GHNP to meet their livelihood needs. Government, international and national agencies believed that people would freely let go of their rights to forest resources if they were provided attractive incentives to encourage them to decrease their reliance on forest resources (Baviskar 2003). Providing incentives would address two issues: one, that the government would not have to settle resource claims; and two, they could move forward with their goals for conservation while ensuring that people were not left worse off as a result (Baviskar 2003).

According to Pandey (2008) (and the GHNP Director while I was in Tirthan valley) the ecodevelopment project was initiated in the fall of 1994, with

⁹⁹ I see this now in my work with mining companies and mined induced relocation and resettlement. Compensation and everything associated it is an incredibly contentious issue – and results in a great deal of unrest.

an approximately 2 million dollar loan from the World Bank to be paid over 5 years. The loan would be put towards scientific research, capacity building for park staff, and socio-economic development which was in part to be achieved by developing WSCGs and positioning them as vehicles through which income generating ecodevelopment activities could be carried out (Pandey 2008, Baviskar 2003).

6.4 Resisting Development and Conservation

Notification of intent to create the GHNP was drafted in 1984, however there was no attempt to formally acquire rights from local communities before the GHNP's final notification. The Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) stipulates that all usufruct rights in a national park must be acquired (through compensation) and extinguished before the final notification. Politicians, experts (scientists in this case), and bureaucrats had not made an effort to explain the provisions outlined in the WLPA to the affected population, and consequently local populations remained uninformed until early 1995. In November 1994, issues resulting from the creation of the GHNP were brought to the fore in a conference Navrachna organized.¹⁰⁰ Environmental activities, representatives of NGOs in Himachal Pradesh and Forest Department officials attended the conference. At this time the Director of GHNP made a presentation on the status of the Park, plans for ecodevelopment, and the benefits that would result.

Following the conference Navrachna visited villages that bordered the GHNP to train village people to disseminate information on the Wildlife Protection Act, the GHNP, the ecodevelopment project, and how local livelihoods would be impacted. When local people became aware of plans for the GHNP they protested and blocked roads that connected the GHNP to district headquarters. Local people demanded that the GHNP provide information about the project, specifically how project money would be spent. A public meeting was held in a village neighbouring the GHNP, the GHNP Director attended this meeting in an attempt to engage the public and build community relations. At the meeting the GHNP Director insisted that the Park would not take away local rights to resources, stressing that they were very fortunate to be involved with the ecodevelopment project. This public meeting did very little to

¹⁰⁰ Navrachna is a forum for discussion on issues of natural resource management and governance, based in Palampur but drawing its membership from all over the state.

minimize unrest, and protests continued, becoming even more coordinated and organized. An effigy of the Park Director was erected in a local village, with local people hurling insults and rocks at it, until it was finally set on fire. The GHNP Director needed to rethink his strategy to get local people on board, obviously his visits to villages were not leading to desired outcomes. In an attempt tackle interests in conservation and development from grass roots the GHNP Director facilitated the creation of an NGO called SAHARA (section 6.6 in this chapter focuses on SAHARA and its role in diffusing community dissent).

As explained in Chapter 4 with the improved road networks, new cropping patterns, prioritizing fruit and vegetables over barley, wheat and beans, and increasing population density, local people's relationships with the GHNP and forest resources has been transforming. Larger landowners and those close to the road, best positioned to benefit from market opportunities, do not rely on the GHNP for resources. Poor local families and migrant labourers continue to rely on forest resources. Responses to the GHNP and ecodevelopment varied significantly depending on where one lies on the socio-economic spectrum. Poor and middle-income households formed the largest group of opponents – primarily older men, young men prefer opportunities in the service sector, and to move away from rural life. Young men's lack of interest in rural life (Chapter 4 provides insight into this) made it very difficult to draw them into the resistance.

The ecodevelopment project was not able to come to terms with transforming communities whose priorities for, and interests in, forest use was evolving. Thus it continued to rely on existing administrative units, token representation of women and Scheduled Castes, and assumptions about self-sufficient, subsistence-oriented, unchanging communities. Instead of being inspired by ecodevelopment goals and objectives, village people perceived the project as a vehicle for short-term benefits. Experts and bureaucrats continued to turn a blind eye to the complexity and dynamic nature of communities. Every time an ecodevelopment initiative was unsuccessful, rather than critically rethinking plans, blame was simply placed on local people who failed to comply with the wishes of the state.

6.5 Ecodevelopment in Tirthan Valley

Baviskar (2003), Pandey and Wells (1997) and Pandey (2008) provide insight into

the practice of ecodevelopment, both drawing from their own experiences in Tirthan valley. Baviskar's (2003) study revealed that the GHNP was indeed stuck in between the World Bank's demands for results and village people's demands for access to resources. Thus with limited capacity and lack of resources, the GHNP gave into mounting pressure from the World Bank and village people and made the decision to distribute ecodevelopment funds equally among all village people (Baviskar 2003; Panday 2008), rather than determine eligibility criteria that identifies different social groups that exist in the area and the extent of impact on these groups if their resource use was altered (Baviskar 2003:289). Baviskar (2003:289) notes that some village people argued that those households granted loans through other government programs should not be eligible for ecodevelopment funds 'because their "quota" for *sarkari* (government) money was full'. Baviskar (2003) goes on to explain that although GHNP officials decision to distribute funds equally among village people was based on the desire to minimize any tensions that may result between village people, it also separated 'ecodevelopment investment from its rationale of changing resources use towards greater ecological sustainability' (Baviskar 2003: 289). This approach to distributing funds may have kept a larger proportion of the local population content; however the consequence was that no one was encouraged to change their resource use practices so that they were in line with conservation objectives outlined for ecodevelopment (Baviskar 2003).

Budgets, demands for audits, and other administrative procedures impacted how ecodevelopment funds were spent and distributed, often hindering overarching goals for appropriate interventions (Baviskar 2003). Baviskar (2003:292) shares an example of this:

'Hundreds of pressure stoves and gas connections were purchased with ecodevelopment money...to encourage fuel-saving habits among villagers. However, virtually none of the 130 villages in the ecodevelopment zone to whom the cookers were distributed go to the Park to collect fuelwood'.

Like Baviskar (2003) I found that village people lacked real interest in ecodevelopment, one reason was that the majority of those targeted for ecodevelopment did not actually rely on forest resources available in the GHNP.

Another reason was that village people were not convinced that it was necessary to alter the way they utilised forested lands, and any changes in use were only because they were being “forced” to do so. In terms of curbing village people’s collection of endangered medicinal plants, in Chapter 4 and 5 I explain that migrant men carry out much of the medicinal plant collection and not village people. Regardless, the GHNP ecodevelopment project has claimed success. How was this success produced? A series of “brokers” were able to diffuse community dissent through a number of day-to-day negotiations, which were then translated into and linked to indicators of success developed by the GHNP with the assistance of a number of experts. Before I present my ethnographic material to show how ecodevelopment was able to translate practices into success, in the next section I clarify my theoretical concerns to contextualize the remaining sections in this chapter.

6.6 Brokers and Translators: Clarifications and Definitions

From an actor-oriented perspective, an intervention is not just a series of activities, strategies, and objectives; instead it is a negotiated process that takes shape through a number of interactions between different actors (Long & Van Der Ploeg, 1989). The focus has been on an actor’s practices, interpretation of these practices, and the process that construct knowledge and power (Long 1992; Long 1997). ANT and actor-oriented approach provide similar insights into what interventions consist of, and how they are able to create knowledge. For example Murdoch (1997) shows how Pasteur was able to generate wide interest in his anthrax vaccine by involving actors located outside the laboratory to spread information to the masses. In this instance the scientist’s influence is nestled in his capacity to create a network, draw other actors to this network, and speak on behalf of these actors. An advocate for an intervention takes on a similar role when he or she attempts to create interest in a core set of principles and practices, and then builds a network of actors to sustain the idea, technology, or practice. Research in this field has mapped networks, including the characteristics of relationships, collaboration, and power, and how they take shape (Murdoch 1997). These types of studies allow one to understand how government bureaucracies and development organizations function and the differences between formal objectives

and goals and those that are a result because of practices and strategies pursued by actors that exist at different organizational levels (Lewis 2003). The actor-oriented approach emphasizes both the characteristics of social actors, and the relationships between them, while ANT prefers to focus on the characteristics of networks instead of characteristics of individual actors.

Sanghamitra (2002) found that early research, such as that carried out by Chambers (1994, 1997) on participatory approaches emphasised the need to examine disparities in power that exist between “insider” or community level stakeholders, and “outsiders” such as donors and government agencies. Sanghamitra (2002) explains that ‘subsequent analysis has since brought forward the need to consider diversity and imbalances in power among what were once thought to be homogenous “insider” groups (Agrawal & Gibson 1999; Chambers 1994; Gujit 1996; Gujit & Kaul Shah 1998; Mosse 1994 for examples)’. An understanding of how to manage and unpack relationships between diverse organizations and groups is important for many resource management studies (see Gezon 1998; Grimble & Wellard 1996; Hobley & Shields 2000; Uphoff 1992), and critical to the future of internationally financed conservation programs.

I feel the need to clarify that the "actor" here is not necessarily a “stakeholder”. The term stakeholder was used in earlier chapters of this thesis to refer to individuals and social groups of various kinds with an interest or stake in a particular issue or system (see for instance Agrawal & Gibson 1999; Grimble & Wellard 1996; Hobley 1996; Leach & Scoones 1999). In actor-oriented research the term actor is used to explicitly indicate those individuals or social groups that have the capacity for decision-making and action (Hindess 1988). While all actors are potential stakeholders, not all stakeholders are necessarily actors. For example groups defined by characteristics such as class or gender would not be considered as actors, unless they were also capable of joint decision and action (Hindess 1988). Actors can be individuals, sub groups, organizations, and alliances between organizations.

The actor-oriented approach makes room for brokering, the theme of Lewis and Mosses’ (2006) *Development Brokers and Translators: The ethnography of Aid and Agencies*. Brokerage is the way 'in which social actors operate as active agents building social, political, and economic roles rather than simply following normative scripts' (Bierschenk *et al.* 2002, cited in Lewis & Mosse 2006:11).

Brokers are ‘powerful, yet marginal and vulnerable figures located between fault lines and connection points within complex systems and relationships’ (Lewis & Mosse 2006:12). As I will illustrate through my discussion on the NGO SAHARA, GOs and WSCGs, brokers mediate different interests (Lewis & Mosse, 2006). I will also show that, although it is not explicitly stated or apparent, GOs have key positions within their institutions because they translate interests, ‘creating context by tying in supporters and so sustaining interpretations’ (Mosse & Lewis 2006:13). A broker’s role in ecodevelopment is to create order, legitimize ecodevelopment success and ensure that funds continue to flow into support ecodevelopment related activities. My observations and resulting analysis are supported by the analysis Mosses’ (2005) provides in *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice in India*. In this ethnography Mosse (2005) explored how people’s everyday practices that were not aligned with project goals, sustained and protected official interpretations of events and actions so that success and their own interests were protected.

6.7 SAHARA: Making Conservation Happen

It was obvious to the GHNP officials that the ecodevelopment project could not be carried out by the GHNP alone. It was necessary to have a local NGO at the forefront, and through which the GHNP could implement their goals and objectives for ecodevelopment, and ultimately conservation. In keeping with the assumption that local organizing is ‘a precondition for successful and sustainable rural development’ (Mosse 2005: 161), SAHARA’s partnership with the GHNP began in 1999. Considering that SAHARA’s primary purpose was to create alternative sources of livelihoods for village people residing in the ecodevelopment area and to spread the virtues of conservation, I was keen to learn more about the social and political dimensions of SAHARA and its staff. Having local people involved with the NGO gave the impression to outsiders (donor organizations, government agencies) and to other village people, that there were in fact many people who supported conservation initiatives advocated by the GHNP staff. If the SAHARA staff, a group of local village people, supported conservation then perhaps other village people would see that they too should support conservation.

In the world of development SAHARA would be considered an intermediary organization, because its main role was to support communities in altering their resource use so that it was in line with conservation principles and objectives. Shiv Dutt was the Director of SAHARA. It was not only his caste, *Rajput*, and his wealth that made him an ideal candidate for the Director position; he was also known to be an excellent public speaker, involved in local politics and working with a local literacy campaign. My first encounter with him was when I watched him present SAHARA's work at a workshop for Environmental NGOs in Kullu District. I was impressed by his ability to captivate, and engage with, his audience. He was by far the best public speaker at the workshop, and it was only after his presentation that many NGO staff approached him to learn more about SAHARA.

In one of my many meetings with the GHNP Director, I asked why he had not encouraged a local woman to consider taking the SAHARA Director position, if he was in fact keen on “empowering” local women. He felt that a man would have an easier time moving within and outside the valley to attend conferences, meetings and workshops; he would not be restricted by household tasks and obligations. All were valid reasons for appointing Shiv Dutt SAHARA Director; another reason may have been that he was relatively comfortable giving Shiv Dutt orders, knowing that Shiv Dutt would most certainly comply - a relationship was established and it was favourable for both Directors. It would be much more difficult for the GHNP Director to cultivate a similar relationship with a village woman.¹⁰¹ Shiv Dutt's interest in the NGO Director position was motivated by his desire to improve his standing in the valley, and to increase his networks outside the valley. I spoke with Shiv Dutt at length on a number of occasions, in an interest to develop a clear understanding of his role as Director and why the directorship was important to him. With the Director position came the opportunity to liaise with people outside the realm of a village, those with a great deal more power and influence than the average person in Tirthan valley; people such as the GHNP Director, senior Forest Department officials, and local

¹⁰¹ The GHNP Director, like many officers in the Forest Department, is not accustomed to working with women. They are used to interacting with female staff who are located outside their everyday: international NGO staff, female directors from other NGOs, female donor agency staff, academics and researchers. However, to interact with local women from the villages would not be a consideration.

politicians. Having the opportunity to meet personnel from development agencies based in Delhi, or foreigners from international agencies, and local political figures, allowed him a status in the valley that extended beyond his professional life and into his personal life. For the SAHARA Director representing the ecodevelopment project allowed him space to develop his own position within valley politics, to further expand his already extensive network and place himself firmly in a position of influence within this network.

However, Shiv Dutt's legitimacy was not a result of his work with SAHARA or his views on conservation. As far as I was able to ascertain, he was indifferent to conservation, forest management, and development. His family's livelihood was not affected by the GHNP boundaries; very few of his family members relied on forests for their livelihoods. Shiv Dutt's role in forest management and conservation and his legitimacy with Forest Department, and with the GHNP staff, was a result of the support he received from the GHNP Director. Shiv Dutt's role with SAHARA was less to facilitate staff and manage administrative tasks, and more to link the GHNP staff to village people residing in the valley and to pass down GHNPs goals for conservation to the SAHARA Coordinator and the GOs. He was one of the many brokers in the development chain.

The SAHARA Director's goals for ecodevelopment were the GHNPs goals for the ecodevelopment. There were a few instances when he suggested to me that some of the goals that GHNP had for the MPPAs (discussed later in this chapter) project were unrealistic, however he felt that he was not in the position to bring up these issues with GHNP staff and continued to forge ahead. He was most concerned with increasing the number of WSCGs. This seemed to represent project success to the GHNP staff and was presented to donors and government officials as an indicator of project success. Later, the number of MPPAs, and the number of plant species in each MPPA, also became indicators of success. At countless presentations I listened to the GHNP Director (after presenting the number of WSCG) say, "and now we have 90 MPPAs, and in each one the WSCG planted 22,500 species of high value medicinal plants". It was obvious that GHNP officials were aware of the image that must be portrayed to the outside world (governments, donors, international NGOs); the terms necessary to maintain this image were then dictated to SAHARA and it was left to the SAHARA Director

and his staff to create and maintain the required representation of people and parks coexisting.

SAHARA was in essence created by the GHNP as a tool to produce success. SAHARA did not have the capacity to acquire funds. Not one member of the SAHARA staff had experience writing a funding or grant proposal, they also did not have access to information on possible sources of funding other than those available through the GHNP or the Forest Department. The GHNP Director identified possible sources of funding, wrote funding proposals, and if successful delivered funds to SAHARA. National and international donor agencies used the GHNP Director as a contact point because SAHARA staff members did not speak English or have reliable access to telecommunications. The GHNP Director had on occasion invited Rajendra to donor meetings; however, these meetings were often in English and Rajendra's participation did not extend beyond being present. All discussion was directed towards the GHNP Director. These factors gave the GHNP Director room to shape SAHARA's priorities and activities.

In Lewis' discussion on NGOs and civil society in Bangladesh he highlights that the impression that NGOs and the state have tense relations is generally 'mythic' (Lewis 2004:313 citing White 1999) as these two were most often connected by their 'overlapping dependence' on foreign donors; also the 'depoliticisation of development problems through the now ubiquitous policy language of government/NGO 'partnerships' brings NGOs and state together into relationships of collaboration' (Lewis citing White 2004:313). According to Escobar (1995) and Ferguson (1994), NGOs financial dependence on donors creates a situation where, as NGOs increase in size and prestige, their growing need for foreign funding ties them even tighter to western donor priorities. In response NGOs modify their goals and actions to fit donor criteria so that they can access and maximize donor funding, and they do this by specialising and streamlining their project activities (Ferguson 1994). The result is that NGOs are progressively more shaped by international development discourses established in the western world.

Ferguson (1994) and Escobar (1995) stress that depoliticisation results from this dependency on donor resources: first, there is economic dependency of NGOs on western donors, which makes them vulnerable to interests of donors; and second, NGOs are often influenced by the broader dependency of Third World

development practitioners on development policy emerging from policy making centres in the First World. A number of studies have explicitly confirmed Escobar and Ferguson's arguments related to depoliticisation of the NGO sector (see for example Ulvila & Hoosaim 2002). Lewis (citing White 1999) argues that 'both common interest models of the state and civil society partnership and simple opposition models of civil society balancing the state will therefore need re-examining' (2004:313).

An understanding of NGO dependence on donor funding is essential because it brings into question an NGO's legitimacy (Hellinger *et al.* 1988; Lehmann 1990), the nature of relationship between the NGO and the funding body, and finally it brings forward concerns related to accountability. To what extent is an NGO dependent on official sources of funding "non-governmental"? As Van der Heijden (1987:106) explains, quoting a traditional African proverb, 'if you have your hand in another man's pocket, you must move when he moves'. Edwards and Hulme go on to state that 'the degree to which a strategy or mix of strategies compromises the logic by which legitimacy is claimed needs to be considered carefully, and can provide a useful means of testing whether organizational self-interest is a subordinating mission when a choice is being made' (1992:213). Secondly if an NGO receives funding to deliver services does the relationship move from partner to contractor? The move from partner to contractor, similar to the move from beneficiary to consumer when services are privatised, indicates a significant change in a value of a relationship. For instance, SAHARA obtained its legitimacy as an organization from its contract with the GHNP, SAHARA worked exclusively with the GHNP on ecodevelopment. Thirdly, as Farrington and Beddington (1993:188) point out, there are a number of fundamental concerns related to the possible 'rewriting of the social contract' between the government and its citizens when an NGO replaces the state in crucial aspects of development, specifically in relation to providing services¹⁰². The accountability of a non-elected NGO, when providing services to "clients", differs significantly from formal relationships established between governments and its citizens, giving rise to what Wood (1996) termed a

¹⁰² This has become an important issue for mining companies with mines in the developing world. A mining company cannot and should not replace the government; however, in many cases a mine becomes responsible for the provision of basic services to isolated communities neighbouring a mine site.

‘franchise state’. Some NGOs insert themselves between the state and its citizens, to advocate and support civic participation through a variety of vehicles; however, based on my observations, SAHARA served primarily as an instrument by which corporate/state interests are realised. While some NGO initiatives could play an instrumental role in mobilizing democratic movements from the grass roots, SAHARA was an efficient vehicle for the flow of resources and its success as an NGO was assessed in terms of the numbers of beneficiaries and resources allocated and disbursed. The nature of SAHARA's relationships with state entities did not lend itself to challenging donor interests or on-going development practices. Below I examine roles of responsibilities of a number of SAHARA team members to show how a contracted NGO delivers project success to donors and government agencies.

6.8 Group Organizers (GOs): Engaging Beneficiaries in the Project Paradigm

It is brokers ‘who work across institutional, cultural, value and other boundaries’ (Lewis & Mosse 2006:5) to maintain the 'disjuncture' between policy and practice, and to ultimately create project/program success. Bierschenk and his collaborators (2002) show how organizational success is produced and maintained when brokers negotiate and manage different and competing interests. Here I illustrate how SAHARA’s GOs who exist within, and navigate through, the space between the GHNP and the WSCGs (I discuss WSCG in the following section), function as brokers and thereby maintain the disjuncture between GHNP policy and SAHARA practice. I do this to argue that project success depends on the broker’s ability to manage, and in some cases bury, tensions and contradictions beneath representations that demonstrate order and the successful implementation of policy (Lewis & Mosse 2006).

Prior to meeting the GOs, I asked the SAHARA Director, “What qualifications must one have to be a GO?”:

SAHARA Director (SD): “They must be respectful, from good families, somewhat educated, know how to speak to elders and people of authority.”

Shilpa: “How should they speak to people with authority?”

SD: “They should speak humbly, with respect, and be sweet. They should present themselves nicely – look nice not just with elders but in the villages.”

Thus GOs are not selected at random; for GOs to be effective in brokering project success and mediating NGO and GHNP interests they must have certain attributes and portray a specific image, this then affords them the legitimacy they require to broker success. While I was in Tirthan valley, SAHARA had between 8 and 10 GOs. Mamta, Shanti and Manorma were the organizations senior GOs. They were considered senior team members because they were considerably older than their colleagues, ranging in age from 30 to 37. They were also unmarried, literate, educated (completed Class 10), from relatively well-to do families, and belonged to the high-caste (*Rajput*) majority. The other GOs were much younger, educated and unmarried. When I arrived in Tirthan valley the fact that most GOs were young and unmarried was proving to be a problem; three of the GOs were married just prior to my arrival, and were no longer able to carry on with their GO responsibilities. To recruit new GOs, staff members asked their relatives and friends if they were interested or knew of someone who may be interested in the position. This method of recruitment, although common in many types of organizations be it private or public, often creates a socially homogenous group of employees. In the case of SAHARA, GOs were women from similar, if not the same, socio-economic background and were considered village elite. This system of recruitment formed a very visible barrier between GOs and WSCG members. While most of the WSCG members were high-caste women they would not be considered members of the village elite. WSCG members were uneducated, most often illiterate, and spent most days working in their family's agricultural fields. WSCG members addressed the GOs with formal greetings: they touched her feet (a sign of respect) and were much more reserved in her presence.

Recruiting staff through one's own networks ensures a degree of loyalty (Lewis 2004), however this makes it impossible for low- caste women to become GOs. One of SAHARA's criteria for recruitment is that they employ low-caste women as GOs and form WSCGs that explicitly include low-caste village women. It was quite obvious that at the time of my fieldwork not one of the SAHARA GOs was of low-caste. Apparently in SAHARA's early years there were two GOs from low-caste families. However other GOs on staff at SAHARA felt that "lower caste families do not encourage or support their women's involvement in such activities", and therefore these two women were unable to continue with the NGO. Later in my

fieldwork I had the opportunity to meet Premlata Devi, a *Harijan* woman who worked briefly as a GO for SAHARA. I asked her why she left SAHARA; she replied, “the women in the WSCG that I was coordinating did not want me to be the GO for their group because I am *Harijan*”.¹⁰³ I asked Premlata more questions that would provide me a better understanding of caste relations within SAHARA. She told me of an incident at a workshop held in the GHNP office at Shamshi (about 30 km outside the valley). There was break in the schedule for lunch, and the GOs decided to eat their meal outside in the sun. When Premlata took a seat next to the other GOs, they discreetly asked her to find another place to sit, telling her “this area is already full”, and “having no one else to sit with I took a seat next to the GHNP Director and spoke with him while I ate”. Needless to say this did nothing to improve her relationship with the other SAHARA GOs; it only increased their hostility towards Premlata. Low-caste women continue to be left out of leadership positions within the NGO. Those that are encouraged to join eventually leave feeling inadequate and marginalised by NGO staff and clients. It was difficult for low-caste women to function as brokers because their legitimacy as community members was questioned on a daily basis. Thus it was in the NGOs interest not to actively encourage low-caste women to join their team.

GOs have been able to carve out a powerful position for themselves within SAHARA. They were a bridge that connected SAHARA and the GHNP to village women; this role improved their already high standing in the valley to what Premlata thought to be “almost goddess like levels”. It is through them the objectives for creating groups and accumulating savings were achieved. Although WSCG members complained that GOs “think too much of themselves”, they did have a great deal of respect for the GOs and considered them to be educated, mobile women, from “good families”, and “local”. GOs also delivered what the GHNP, and therefore SAHARA, aimed to present as an example of conservation and development success; local women who actively supported the GHNP mandate, not only as SAHARA employees but also as primary forest users. They uphold the representation of conservation that has been put forward by the GHNP, knowing

¹⁰³ I found an interesting way to know whether a WSCG was mixed with both low and his caste women was to see where the meetings were held. Most often if the meetings were held in a WSCG members home the group consisted of only high-caste women. If meetings were held outside in a common space within the hamlet or village, the group had low-caste members. Low-caste villagers cannot enter the home of a high-caste villagers’.

that what was presented was not entirely accurate, and because of this were able to leverage power within the NGO and the GHNP office. They were brokers in the sense that they maintained the disjuncture between project goals and practices. Heaton-Shresthra (2006:213) suggests they can and do prevent ‘these worlds from mixing’, as Latour explains (cited in Heaton Shresthra 2006:213) ‘...the work of “purification”: keeping distinct the world of beneficiaries, the “particularistic”, “tradition bound”, “non-modern”, and the world of benefactors, “the progressive,” “universalistic”, “modern.”...’

When GHNP staff invited foreign donor agency representatives to the area to witness first-hand the progress made in Tirthan valley, it was both the GOs and the WSCG that were presented as evidence of outstanding success. The visitors were taken to the “good” or more suitable WSCGs¹⁰⁴ with a GO. When agency representatives came to the GHNP to witness ecodevelopment success, the SAHARA Director would often rely on one or two particular GOs to show these visitors the MPPAs and/or to meet WSCG members. Mamta was often asked to facilitate interactions between the WSCG members and visitors. After six years of working with SAHARA, Mamta was well aware of what donor agency staff and officials are expecting to see, and the types of questions that would most likely be asked to WSCG members. Prior to the visit Mamta informed the WSCG members of the day and approximate time that she would be arriving with visitors, and made clear that the all members were to be present. Mamta provided some explanation as to who would be visiting and the purpose of the visit. I learned that the variety of representatives from international NGOs, government agencies, and other donor funded projects, felt that meeting WSCG members with one of the GOs provided them with a more accurate account of the project and village life, the experience to them “was authentic”.¹⁰⁵ These visits to WSCGs, with a seasoned GO, reinforced to all that project success was in fact achieved. Government and donor agency visitors were often briefed by the GHNP before they met with WSCG members, and thus came with the expectation of viewing women actively engaged in conservation and development. Neither the SAHARA Director nor the GHNP staff could provide

¹⁰⁴ There are some WSCG that are ideal for display, “the visit village”, those that provide the image that the GHNP staff want to portray, and are located close to the road, so that they are accessible by visitors who do not want to hike to far.

¹⁰⁵ Although SAHARA and GHNP staff are present at field visits by foreigners, the visits would not be held without a GOs.

access to village women in the way GOs were able to. These visits were very important to the GHNP Director as they worked to secure project success, and the GOs were well aware of this.

My intention in this section was to illustrate how brokerage takes place in the context of the ecodevelopment project, and also that brokers were not random village women who happened to represent local populations. They had specific characteristics that allowed them to broker the flow of information and activities between village people and the NGO, and state interests, to ultimately ensure project success. The GOs role as brokers puts them in the position of determining which actors to engage in WSCG and legitimize in the production of success, and thereby they decided who had a formal voice and role in ecodevelopment.

GOs were not the only brokers in the ecodevelopment project; WSCG members were also brokers and vehicles for ecodevelopment activities. They brokered project success not only by presenting themselves as poor village women, unempowered and in need of income generating opportunities, but also by displaying their participation in ecodevelopment activities to visitors from donor agencies, government agencies, and other NGOs. Without WSCGs there was no project and thus no conservation success. This very fact granted WSCG members some level influence on how project success would be maintained. The following section examines the space WSCG occupy in the ecodevelopment project to demonstrate the different levels at which brokering took place.

6.9 Women Saving Credit Groups (WSCG): Conserving and Saving

In an initial interview, the GHNP Director spoke at length about the need for development projects to place special emphasis on empowering women. He went on to outline the many virtues of women, they were considerably more adept with finances and household budgeting than their male counter parts, and were also primary users of natural resources. I often wondered if this belief in women's "empowerment" came from the development rhetoric that was consumed in large doses at donor agency conferences, and the fact that the advancement of women alongside conservation made for an appealing presentation to donor agencies. As Heaton highlights (Mosse 2005:170 citing Heaton 2001: 184-5) 'in project representations - reports, photographs, and brochures – there is indeed a

‘feminisation of the beneficiary’’, women give the desired example of success (Mosse: 2005:170). Fernando and Heston (1997) also point out that NGOs that target women as primary beneficiaries from program or project activities have achieved higher returns from the investments. On many occasions the GHNP Director reiterated:

“Villagers participate in SAHARA programs because they have the potential to improve their current situation. In a male dominated, poverty-ridden society, the local womenfolk, who constitute at least half of the population, play a very important role. So far we have just over 500 members of the WSCG, which comprise 92 groups. Each of these women saves one rupee a day; their savings now totals to some 450,000 rupees”.

These figures were emphasised in presentations to a variety of different agencies and organizations interested in learning about the GHNP's success with ecodevelopment. The feeling was that presenting the number of WSCG and their accumulated savings exemplified an impressive step forward in development and was a sign of project success. This resonates with Mosses’ (2005: 171) observations that women’s savings groups have been used as a tool to meet development success. Mosse (2005) explains that these groups provide a means by which success can be quantified, recorded, and easily presented. However, what I show below is that in creating these groups, complicated relationships and negotiations within the village and valley were concealed (Premchander 2003; Ayanwale *et al.* 2004, Burra 2005, Kaboski *et al.* 2005).

“How do they save one rupee a day?” I asked the GHNP Director. He acknowledged that it was often difficult for village women to save one rupee a day. In order for women to have “cash in hand”, it was necessary to have access to wage labour. The GHNP staff, in conjunction with the Forest Department, began creating employment opportunities for women. A percentage of the wages earned from these opportunities were to be deposited into the WSCG account. WSCG members were given work in Forest Department nurseries for which they were paid a daily wage of 65 rupees, and it was mandatory to deposit 30 rupees (1 rupee a day) into the WSCG account. Although an interesting idea, this system of creating income and then enforcing deposit of 30 rupees into the WSCG account seemed to resemble a ‘membership fee’ that allowed women access to benefits

provided by the NGO (Mosse 2005: 119). On many occasions, Mamta (a GO) voiced her frustrations with WSCG members to me. Firstly:

“The women demanded to work in the Forest Department nurseries because they were told by the GHNP staff that they were to be given work first, before anyone else, but there is very little work in the nursery; when it is possible they are given work”.

Secondly, she found it incredibly difficult to encourage women to save the 30 rupees that was intended for the WSCG:

“They spend the money as soon as they get it. I feel that I need to stand outside the Forest Department office and forcibly take the money for the WSCG as they leave the office after collecting their wages. If I do not push them to save they spend it right away, and would not deposit any money into the WSCG”.

Govind SAHARA's Program Coordinator also expressed this very concern:

“This whole project sometimes seems to be a joke. The GHNP Director comes here and tells the WSCG members that they are to get work in the Forest Department nurseries. However, he does not first consult us or ask the appropriate Forest Department official if there is work to be done in the nursery. The women (members of the WSCG) sit on our heads, telling us the Director told them there is work for them. When they do work in the nursery they spend the money almost immediately, and very little if any goes into the WSCG account”.

When I asked WSCG members if they deposited the money earned from whatever work they were assigned, most sheepishly responded, “no they did not”. Those who worked for more than two or three days, and earned over 60 rupees per day from their work, would only deposit 30 rupees per month, never anything more. I was left with the impression that because this money from the NGO was not attached to social systems or obligations embedded within village life it was considered to be extra money – a bonus of sorts. By contributing money into the WSCG account, and accumulating funds, women were able to secure their place as clients of SAHARA. If they did not accumulate funds, SAHARA would transfer their efforts to another WSCG. Women wanted to prevent this; being clients of the project most certainly had benefits they wanted access to, such as employment opportunities and the occasional “free gift” (for example WSCG members were

given free back packs, with GHNP written on the front, for attending a workshop on medicinal plant propagation areas). Mosse (2005:120) highlights the difference between money as social obligations and money without social obligations, using the example of the *chandla*¹⁰⁶:

In *chandla* money directly reproduced social obligations (payments simultaneously met and generated obligation) through personal networks. In *chandla* money is obligation: it is “hot”, constantly circulating, generating more obligation and more money within particular social networks.... Voluntary savings into a project-supported group fund involved no such obligations.... (Mosse 2005:120).

There was also a great deal of resentment towards women who were allotted more work in the nurseries than others. Jindi, a *Harijan* village woman, was told that every month she would be granted 15 days of work in the Forest Department nursery by a high ranking Forest Department official. This decision was made without consulting the forest guards, NGO staff, GOs and other WSCG members in Jindi’s group. Thus it created a great deal of animosity between Jindi and the other WSCG members, who felt they were equally poor and deserved the same assurance of paid work. I wondered why the work in the nursery was highly sought after. I began going to the Forest Department nursery to work alongside WSCG members. It became clear that work in the nursery was not very demanding. Much time was spent gossiping and teasing one another, and in between their work in the nursery women could run off and tend to their cattle, children, and the washing. I also learned that WSCG members were sending their young daughters to the Forest Department nursery, to work on their behalf if they could not free themselves from their household activities. To cover their mother’s “shifts” in the nursery these young girls would often miss a day or two of school, and on occasion important exams, this in itself has significant implications for efforts aimed at improving women’s position in rural society.

Many of the WSCG members were not poor and/or low-caste women, as “required” by the project mandate. Many WSCG members were from relatively well off families had some formal primary education and approximately 95 per cent of the women in the WSCG’s in Tirthan valley were high-caste *Rajput*. A

¹⁰⁶ *Chandla* is an indigenous financial institution in tribal western India.

large percentage of these WSCG members were recruited from the GOs villages, and were relatives or friends of the GO. This guaranteed a greater degree of participation, an important project objective. The GOs would often tell me that they “feel much more at ease with WSCG groups in which they knew the members well”; there was a mutual understanding of what was required from participation in SAHARA activities, and willingness to comply. However, the project also required the membership of low-caste women. Initially there was some participation by low-caste women, however, these women eventually left the WSCGs feeling frustrated by the discrimination they were experiencing. Bimla Devi, who was once a member of the Guruda WSCG, recounted to me the discrimination she experienced in her WSCG. She was not able to contribute more than 30 rupees a month to the WSCG; however, the other group members (all high-caste) explained to her that they wanted to increase the amount they were contributing. The members told her that if she could not contribute more she should leave the group because she was holding the rest of them back. She eventually did, and later found out that even after she left the Guruda WSCG, members continued to only contribute 30 rupees a month. Bimla Devi felt that they made “all that noise about wanting to contribute more money each month just to have me out of the group”. The Guruda WSCG meeting used to be held outside the *panchayat* office; however, now that the group consists only of high-caste women, the meetings were held in Verma Devi’s home. As mentioned in Chapter 4 low-caste people did not enter high-caste homes.

Very few isolated communities (those that are located quite far from the road and much higher up the valley) were targeted for WSCGs, irrespective of the fact that this was where the poorest, most vulnerable, and most dependent on forest resources (primarily from the GHNP) lived. It was much more convenient for GOs to form WSCG in areas that were physically (i.e. in close proximity to the road¹⁰⁷) and socially (where they have familial ties or clout) accessible to them. SAHARA, through its GOs, ultimately extended their programs to villages where people were likely to be willing partners. Li (1999) makes a similar observation in the case of a

¹⁰⁷ Village close to the road are accessible to for visitors from donor agencies and partner organizations. While I was in Tirthan Valley a group from the Orissa Forest Department came to learn more about Himachal Pradesh’s efforts in forest management. Numerous staff complained that the visits must be to WSCG located near the road; not a two hour hike up.

resettlement scheme in Indonesia: ‘The key from the point of view of the staff is that the people selected should be keen and willing to participate, interested in receiving what the program has to offer, and ready to play their part in making the program a success’ (1999:305). To involve people for whom these programs were designed is to endanger the chances of securing project ‘success’. Even actors that seem the most powerless still hold the power of complicity or disengagement, and this was detrimental if one was keen to create project success.

The partnership between SAHARA and village women who were relatively well-off (via the WSCG), instead of identifying participants who were significantly impacted by the GHNP and were truly worse off, not only went against the mandate for ecodevelopment, it also undermined any assertion that the project was promoting social justice. The process of forming WSCGs exacerbated disparities by making way for unequal access to project related opportunities. In addition, it made the mission of poverty reduction and empowerment a meaningless endeavour because many of the people it claimed to assist already had the attitudes and characteristics expected as outcomes of the development process (Mosse 2005). In the case of Tirthan valley brokers, both GOs and WSCG members reengineered project objectives and meanings according to their own constraints and understanding.

6.10 Disseminating Project Success

The GHNP was keen to showcase the ecodevelopment project as an example of conservation success and that it could be a model for other projects with similar objectives of aligning conservation and development priorities. Considerable effort went into disseminating information on the GHNP and SAHARA activities designed to promote conservation and provide alternative livelihoods. Numerous reports, manuals, and brochures were developed from 1994 to 2004, and when I arrived a film was being produced. Mosses’ (2005) explains that:

Managers of projects find an emphasis on dissemination more rewarding than struggling with the contradictions of implementation....Dissemination involved the production of manuals, national/regional seminarsand several films with catchy titles such as “Seeds of Progress” or “Beyond 2000” (2005:163).

In the case of GHNP, the film “Village Voices, Village Choices” was produced and presented to donors and government agencies in India and abroad. The film depicted a romantic version of village life in which ecodevelopment empowered village women as citizens, improved livelihoods, and was effective in sorting out park and people conflicts. The film, brochures, and pictures produced not only illustrated success visually they also solidified interpretations to the outside world, and worked towards ‘disciplining the thinking and information production of project employees....’ (Mosse 2005:163).

In this section I draw attention to the MPPA project, the primary ecodevelopment activity that was presented to donors and government agencies as a successful example of the marriage between conservation and development objectives. I show that order ‘is primarily an interpretive order, socially sustained through interpretive communities: and necessarily separated from actual events and practices’ (Lewis & Mosse 2006:5). The MPPA project was presented as relevant for “the economic empowerment of village women” and necessary for the conservation of endangered medicinal plant species. When visitors from NGOs, aid agencies, donor agencies, and government agencies came to Tirthan valley to meet with the WSCG members they were also taken to MPPA’s. WSCG members were asked to explain their work on the MPPAs and why it was important to them and the environment. The GHNP Director, SAHARA Director, and the GOs presented the WSCGs and their MPPAs in attempt to illustrate that the project “has garnered WSCG support and was successfully promoting conservation”. Below I discuss WSCG member’s experiences with the MPPA project to show how this project unfolded.

6.10.1 Medicinal Plants Propagation Areas (MPPAs)

Medicinal plant collection and grazing were identified as the most serious threats to flora and fauna in the GHNP area (Tandon 1997). After the GHNP was formed it was believed that because the market for medicinal plants was on the rise there was a need for income generation activities that protected endangered, high-value medicinal plants while responding to market demands. Any initiatives taken to respond to market demand for medicinal plant were focused on directly connecting village people to global markets and reduce the reliance on middlemen. MPPAs

were considered to be the ideal initiative because they not only had the potential to provide alternative sources of income they also had the potential to curb illegal medicinal plant collection. SAHARA began promoting MPPAs in 2000. The GHNP Director was instrumental in developing the MPPA idea, acquiring funds for it, and then passing the project down to SAHARA. MPPAs were to be one hectare in size, with 22,500 medicinal plants in each propagation area.¹⁰⁸ In due course the MPPAs would be extended in size making way for additional plant cultivation. By 2004 SAHARA was able to create 90 MPPAs with the WSCG throughout Tirthan valley.

The MPPAs were fraught with a number of challenges. The WSCG members were to receive training from both SAHARA staff and forest guards. However, neither the SAHARA coordinator nor the forest guards had any knowledge of medicinal plant cultivation and were unsure where to begin. MPPAs were also not one-hectare in size, as they were intended to be.¹⁰⁹ WSCG members were simply doing what they were told without any real interest in the process or the outcome. When I asked the SAHARA staff to tell me more about the MPPA project, I learned that they had not participated in any decisions relating to the project. Informal interviews and discussions with SAHARA staff revealed that not one staff member felt this project would be successful, and they were finding it incredibly difficult to convince WSCG members of the potential perceived benefits. The SAHARA Coordinator felt that:

“This will never work. Really they should be focusing on off-season vegetables. There is a market for them, and villagers are interested in learning more about it. If we are able to link locals to buyers it will definitely be beneficial to villagers. This MPPA idea will never work. The WSCG members are simply not interested; they were never medicinal plant collectors. Also, taking high- altitude plant species and trying to propagate them at lower altitudes will most definitely result in low quality plants. If WSCGs were not paid for their work on the MPPAs they would have outright refused to maintain them.”

Every WSCG was paid 9,000 rupees initially to create the MPPAs, and members were paid 60 rupees per day for any maintenance work (weeding, adding soil,

¹⁰⁸ Primarily *karu*, *nihani*, *patish* and *shinli mingli*. all high-value medicinal plants.

¹⁰⁹ MPPAs must be at least one hectare in size if they are to produce quantities that can meet market demands.

repairing fences) they did in the MPPAs.

In 2004 three of the MPPAs were considered mature¹¹⁰ and could be harvested to assess if the plants grown in the MPPAs were of adequate quality to be marketed. If the results were successful, they could also be used to encourage WSCG members to continue with the MPPA activity. The pilot harvesting program for the MPPAs was carried out on the 5th and 6th of November 2004, and was organized by the GHNP Director and a senior Forest Department official. The main objectives of this harvest were to document the yield of the MPPA, to develop appropriate harvesting techniques that could be replicated in other MPPAs, to collect samples for biochemical analysis (which would be done in Delhi), to establish a system for documenting the MPPA so that it met minimum requirements for organic certification and GACP¹¹¹ guidelines, and finally to show the WSCG members the fruits of their labour.

The harvesting team consisted of the SAHARA MPPA coordinator, the SAHARA Director, Mamta (the GO for this particular WSCG), and WSCG members (those who were able to join the team). The WSCG members who came to assist with the harvesting were paid 60 rupees a day for their labour. The MPPA coordinator's records listed the MPPA as a one hectare plot established in 2000, in which 22,500 medicinal plants were planted (primarily *karu* and *nihani*). However, after asking the WSCG members questions about the MPPA I quickly realized that this was not the case. The MPPA was actually only about 18 months old, less than one hectare (rough measurements were taken of the area which lead to this conclusion), and it was obvious that there were far fewer than 22,500 plants in the propagation area. Regardless, the team continued harvesting a small patch so that we could assess the quality of the plant species, learn about WSCG member's methods for cultivating and upkeep, and train the WSCG members on appropriate harvesting and collection methods. Measurements (weight, height, general quality of the plant) were recorded and the plants were then taken to Delhi for biochemical analysis to assess plant quality.

Most plants in the MPPA had rotted in situ, and those that were alive, were

¹¹⁰ There were considered mature because the plants had been in the MPPA for four years.

¹¹¹ GACP refers to the Good Agricultural and Collection Practice guidelines as set by the World Health Organisation in order to improve the quality of medicinal plant raw material being supplied to pharmaceutical and herbal companies in the West.

very poor in quality. In their natural habitats these plant species were found at high altitudes where there is very little forest cover, and they were exposed to a significant amount of direct sunlight daily. In the MPPA, they were planted in the shade, underneath trees. It is also important to note that traditionally village men or shepherds collected medicinal plants and had extensive informal knowledge of plant requirements, growth rates, and harvesting techniques. The MPPA Coordinator had never collected medicinal plants and was unaware of the specificities of medicinal plant cultivation. WSCG members had never been involved in any aspect of the high-altitude medicinal plant collection or trade. WSCG members complained that animals would dig up and eat the plants in the MPPA. To address this concern the Forest Department provided WSCGs with materials to fence MPPAs, but regardless of the fencing women reported that other villagers continued to let their animals into the area to graze.

The results of the harvest were disappointing to say the least; the total amount of plants collected were nowhere near the amount required to conduct biochemical tests. Regardless, the samples were taken to a laboratory in New Delhi for analysis. The results indicated that the plants were of very poor quality with very low to zero potency of the active medicinal ingredient/chemical. The GHNP Director was incredibly disappointed with the results. However, rather than slow down activities associated with MPPAs, he continued to push forward much to the dismay of SAHARA staff. In 2004-2005 after the harvesting exercise, the MPPAs were increased in size. This was written into the proposal submitted to the NMPB by the GHNP Director, the proposal was successful and funding was granted to increase MPPAs.¹¹² The Director of SAHARA asked me to speak with the GHNP Director; to tell him that increasing the MPPAs was just not possible. He said:

“How can we increase them, where is the land: people are already angry that we have fenced what we have for the MPPA. Now we are also finding that almost all the MPPAs that exist are less than 1 hectare in size”.

The SAHARA Director felt that the GHNP staff would not listen to his concerns but they may listen to me. I spoke with the GHNP staff and suggested that they re-

¹¹² The funds were to pay the members of the WSCG for their work, 10,000 rupees was allotted for each MPPA.

evaluate activities associated with the MPPAs and re-consider the extension of the MPPAs to focus on what already existed. The MPPAs were extended by another hectare in April and May, and WSCG members received their payment for their work soon thereafter. Each woman deposited only the required 30 rupees into the WSCG savings account, the remainder of their earnings were used for purchase household necessities.

WSCG members who participated in the medicinal plant harvesting exercise approached me a few months later and inquired about the results from the harvest, the quality of the plants, and if the plants were sold to a buyer. I asked if anyone from SAHARA had spoken to them after we finished the harvesting - apparently no one had. I was not sure how to respond to their queries. I suggested that they speak directly with the SAHARA staff. It may have been in SAHARA's interest to provide a debriefing session in which they could have presented and explained the results of the harvesting exercise, at the very least to follow through on their mandate for project transparency and accountability.

SAHARA was increasingly caught in the middle of various development agendas and personal agendas. Some actors within SAHARA were able to carve out a space for themselves in specific contexts (i.e. GOs with GHNP and donor agencies), however the legitimacy of the institution continued to be questioned. SAHARA was primarily a conduit for development agendas, and worked tirelessly to maintain the desired representation of conservation for key donor and government agency actors. Although it was labelled an NGO, it seemed to function more as an arm of the GHNP, with SAHARA staff functioning as "GHNP extension staff".

In Chapter 5 I explained how SAHARA, the GHNP and the Forest Department were attempting to reorient the medicinal plant commodity chain to address concerns related to biodiversity conservation. The GHNP developed the MPPA concept and it was assumed that the plants WSCG cultivated in the MPPAs would be sold directly to traders, eliminating middle-men. In essence the WSCGs and the MPPAs were presented as simple and orderly solutions to the dilemma of commodity chain, economic development and conservation. In this chapter I carefully examine the brokers who worked behind the scenes to ensure that an image of a successful project was created and then maintained. My intention in Chapter 5 and 6 was to highlight the connections between rural experiences with

the flow of capital and the policy discourses that travel with them.

I also draw attention to the fact that by placing women as the primary recipients of development assistance one is able to further facilitates the process of commodification. This also increases women's work load - now in addition to child-rearing, crop-harvesting and maintenance, grass-cutting, cooking and cleaning, women are expected to work in MPPAs and in Forest Department plant nurseries, and attend WSCG and GHNP meetings. The new process (MPPA) by which medicinal plants became commodities in Tirthan valley changed the way women's labour was valued; women were negotiating between commodity exchange in a formalized economy and their other interests (as highlighted in Chapter 4). A majority of the village women who participated in the MPPA project did not anticipate it would bear any substantial benefits, however they saw the benefits to WSCG membership. The attention that WSCG members received from donor agencies, government agencies and other NGOs, employment opportunities and free gifts, all allowed some women to assert power in other aspects of their personal life. Thus conservation and development objectives are not the driving force for women's interests in WSCG.

6.11 Creating the Client

The way in which ecodevelopment was implemented by SAHARA and its staff, park authorities and Forest Department officials ultimately watered down the goals originally established for conservation and development (Baviskar 2003). Another significant factor in ecodevelopment implementation was the exclusion of other stakeholders from project planning and negotiations. In the case of Tirthan valley other stakeholders included traders and migrants (see Chapter 5). There was substantial population of Nepali migrant labourers residing in the area, and their livelihoods depended significantly on medicinal plants in addition to the work available in local village people's apple orchards, as discussed in Chapter 4. Migrant groups 'ability to maintain access to natural resources is the weakest' (Baviskar 2003:291) because they had no legal rights. They were 'the poorest and most vulnerable of all groups dependent' (Baviskar 2003:292) on the GHNP to meet their livelihood requirements, but their resource requirements were not understood or considered in plans developed for the region. For the Forest

Department, permanent local residence was the primary criteria for deciding who was a legitimate user and impacted by the creation of the GHNP (Baviskar 2003). There was an unwillingness to understand and tackle social complexities that existed within the region, and to acknowledge the presence of smaller and often invisible groups that were using available resources (Baviskar 2003: 292). Excluding these groups from ecodevelopment could in part be attributed to questions around the legitimacy of their claims to use in forested areas; it could also be result of a bureaucracy that was not at ease with recognizing the presence of migrant populations whose movements were difficult to follow (Baviskar 2003). Village people preferred, in most instances, to exclude these minority groups of resource users from planning exercises because this bolstered their claims as the only users of resources located inside the GHNP and as beneficiaries of the ecodevelopment project (Baviskar 2003). The most popular reason given for leaving non-resident users out of ecodevelopment was that “‘outsiders’ were the problem; they over-harvest and cause problems for the rest of us”. Raju, a high-caste village man living Guruda village told me:

“These Nepalis, for example, are unfamiliar with our ways of collection, they take everything all at once, not understanding that impact of their actions”.

What was considered an ‘outsider’ varied depending on whom you spoke with, for some village people it was the Nepali migrant or the Bihari labourer, for others it was a relative visiting from the neighbouring valley.

Planning initiatives like those associated with ecodevelopment worked to create order, and worked to simply and standardise processes, people and place (Mosse 1986:136). In Tirthan valley social complexities and the bureaucratic nature of the Forest Department and the GHNP office made it difficult to plan and manage ecodevelopment (Baviskar 2003). Baviskar (2003) explains that ecodevelopment was presented as a vehicle by which priorities for conservation and development could be achieved, and it was presented as a glowing example of an informed state. However, in the day to day lives of village people ecodevelopment was just another government program like the many others that have come and gone in the past. Village people did their best to profit from it even as they fought pressures on their resource rights. With ecodevelopment, the

GHNP, Forest Department and village people came together to create their version of community, one that excluded traders and migrant people (Baviskar 2003). By leaving out these groups the project was able to create a simple world where ecodevelopment could most certainly be a solution to obstacles associated with economic development and resource rights. However, as Baviskar (2003) brings forward in her work on ecodevelopment, solutions provided by these types projects are frequently critiqued as stakeholder groups from within, as well as outside, the area work to reshape the processes they were instructed to embrace and incorporate into their lives.

6.12 Conclusions

The GHNP staff legitimized their roles and their presence in the everyday lives of village people in Tirthan valley through legal and scientific systems (Baviskar 2003). These legal and scientific systems of reign are secured as representations and not necessarily connect to actual practice (Mitchell 2002). However, these projects must manage village people who will work with the state to increase their share of benefits from ecodevelopment, while also actively resisting any loss to their existing resource rights (Baviskar 2003). If researchers expand the scope in their studies to explore implicit agendas, fabrications created by different actors can be fully acknowledged allowing for more robust understanding of the forces at work in these types of circumstances. In terms of the GHNP, this type of approach to study could lead to further examination and analysis of relationships and networks.

Three main points emerge from the ethnography presented in this chapter. First, I sought to explain the project of conservation as imagined by GHNP and associated donors and how brokers, like GOs and WSCGs, translated this to village people. I highlighted the key issues for conservation in Tirthan valley, and how the subsequent ecodevelopment project was created in an effort to address tensions created by the GHNP's mandate for conservation. I then moved on to illustrate how conservation and development success was produced. I look at the experience of NGO and government field staff as they understood ecodevelopment as one that required them to mediate and broker a number of interpretations of rural development in the interest of conservation. Two essential aspects of this

project were at loggerheads: the desire to promote conservation coupled with the need for economic progress, and the field staff worked tirelessly to turn this tension into success through a myriad of negotiations. Finally, I showed how beneficiaries were created; those that best represented project success were often chosen over those that would actually benefit from project support.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS

While working at Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) I began to wonder how a development interventions take shape on the ground? How were development policy's we were crafting in Ottawa being received by the people they were meant to assist? How were policy's implemented? These questions brought me to School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and shaped the question guiding this dissertation – how do people understand, relate to, and co-opt external agendas for development and conservation? The field research for this dissertation examined how global agendas and interventions to facilitate an integrated approach to conservation and development, centred on medicinal plants, came together in Tirthan valley. What was revealed is that relationships between emerging market interests in medicinal plants, rural economic development and biological conservation is complex, varies from site to site, and at best ambiguous, in James Fergusons words “development institutions generate their own form of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs....a particular kind of object of knowledge and creates a structure of knowledge around the object. Interventions are then organized on the basis of this structure of knowledge” (1990:xiv).

In this dissertation I suggest that development interventions are pushed along by day-to-day realities of implementing institutions and not necessarily policy. I examine how a development intervention unfolds on the ground to show how practice further solidifies development models like the integrated development and conservation programme (ICDP) and ecodevelopment. I situate development practice within regional political economy and history to show how politics, power and historical priorities have a hand in shaping development interventions and actions that will eventually be brokered by a range of actors.

I explored how a conservation and development initiative termed ecodevelopment was introduced to Tirthan valley and permeated through everyday life. I examined how ecodevelopment was articulated, implemented and managed alongside a number of other priorities village people had for their livelihoods. To do this I began in Chapter 2 with a review of colonial forestry and conservation. There is a significant body of work on colonial interests in forestry for this region, and as history can have a hand in present day interventions I used this work as a foundation upon which to build my understanding and analysis of contemporary forest

management. I moved forward in Chapter 3 to explore contemporary interests and priorities for forest management, specifically policy directives for decentralization and how they take hold in Tirthan valley. In Chapter 4, I delved deeper into everyday life to unpack the term rural transformation and what it means in Tirthan valley. I showed the complex negotiations that took place daily and the number of relationships that allowed one to meet their livelihood requirements. I looked at priorities that shape everyday life for village women and men, and introduced extra local populations that move in and out of Tirthan valley, specifically migrant communities, that relied on local forest areas for their livelihoods. I did this to show that the use of labels like ‘forest dependent’ simplify and classify people and issues so that they meet criteria laid out by government and donor agencies. Labels can place populations into narrowly defined categories that emphasize ‘the way in which people, conceived as objects of policy, are defined in convenient images’ (Wood 1985: 1). Development interventions are frequently based on the assumption that people are poor, uneducated, requiring capacity building (in this case “poor, uneducated rural women”, “poor local forest users”) rather than people who have ideas, agendas and plans (Leach 1996). In Chapters 4 and 5 I drew attention to the growing migrant population to emphasize that they did not figure into this project for conservation and development which was firmly entrenched in the idea of “local forest users” and “empowering rural women” narratives. In Chapter 5 I moved away from my focus on village men and women that reside in Tirthan valley to the many actors that were connected to the medicinal plant commodity chain. I showed that mechanisms and strategies such as market-based medicinal plant conservation did not alter or equalise existing power relations between different actors, instead they resulted in another arena for existing inequalities to be played out. I also showed that in this context one’s knowledge of medicinal plants was shaped predominantly around external interests and trade, and asked the question – how did extra local knowledge (that of traders and migrants in particular) fit into the current ‘local knowledge of local forest users’ narrative? I conclude that conservation and development projects are able to create space for dialogue, however this cannot simply be attributed to successful implementation and management. A number of ‘brokers’¹¹³ worked tirelessly to create ‘representations’¹¹⁴ of success, in this case it

¹¹³ A term borrowed by Mosse and Lewis 2006

was member of WSCGs, GOs and work carried out in MPPAs. However by taking an approach that combines historical forestry, political economy and political ecology what emerges is an examination of the politics of brokering and reproduction. Initiatives like the ecodevelopment project have a tendency to create a selective version of village people's lives and their needs from natural resources (Mosse 2005). Conservation and development interventions must seek a balance between what they intend to do with how these interventions will be implemented by the variety of actors in the development chain - from government agencies, to NGOs, and NGO staff (Mosse 2005). What became evident through this study was the importance of understanding that a fundamental component of intervention lies in the process of identifying, negotiating and establishing a network among key actors (Hindess 1988). In the words of a World Bank official:

There may be errors in the design, and faults in implementation – the final outcome is a negotiated product – a compromise between contradicting interests and perspectives (Correspondence August 23, 2005).

However, there are two points that are critical to negotiation; first, the concept of negotiated outcome often gives one the impression that the result was “less than what was intended” (Mosse & Lewis 2006). The analysis presented in this dissertation shows that outcomes are always different to what was initially intended. By reframing negotiation as an aspect of spreading, translating and finally successfully implementing an intervention like ecodevelopment it becomes evident that negotiations are a key element in project success (Lewis & Mosse 2006). However, it is wrong to assume that negotiations will bring all relevant groups to the table. As I showed in this dissertation, migrant communities and lower caste village people were not given the opportunity to participate in ecodevelopment activities. This led me to question whether every actor could be brought to the negotiation table. In Chapter 3, I discussed efforts to decentralize forest management, so that, as one Forest Department official told me, “there is local involvement and ownership”; essentially it was an effort to bring everyone to the table. My intention in Chapter 3 was to show the gulf between policy and practice, which in this instance was produced by the contradiction between participatory objectives of decentralization

¹¹⁴ A term borrowed by Mosse and Lewis 2006

and the objectives of donor and government programs. I did this to show that the implementation of such initiatives was only possible through the participation of key villagers who ultimately modified project objectives and attempts to “bring everyone to the table” to meet their needs.

In Chapter 6 I showed how the space between conservation and development practice and policy is brokered by a number of key actors to achieve ecodevelopment success. In doing so I explained how key SAHARA staff brokered project success, determining which actors to engage in WSCGs and thereby legitimizing them in the production of success, and giving them a formal voice and role in ecodevelopment. How then was ecodevelopment success created?

7.1 Creating a Successful Conservation and Development Project

This ethnography reveals that the relevance of project activities have very little to do with project success or failure. The disjuncture between representation and policy models determine if an intervention will be successful (see Mosse 2005 for a complete analysis of the disjuncture between policy and practice). As shown in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this dissertation, conservation and development interventions in Tirthan valley were maintained by key actors and their networks, and were translated into terms that were understood within the existing paradigm.¹¹⁵

In Tirthan valley, projects centred on conservation and development upheld policy by a ‘separation between representation and reality’ (Mosse 2005:231). In the case of the GHNP it was decided that the conservation and development project, ecodevelopment, was to be realized through decentralized forest management and market based conservation initiatives that would ultimately bridge conservation of medicinal plants with economic development. This required convincing interpretations of people’s practices, priorities, needs and values. In Chapter 6, I showed that SAHARA GOs intentionally selected WSCG members who would ultimately comply with project objectives; in doing this, GOs protected the project from actions that may work against it and result in failure. I also showed how GOs and beneficiaries only brought forward those actions and processes that were in line with desired and approved project narratives. By utilizing specific indicators to

¹¹⁵ I borrow the idea of translation from Lewis and Mosse’s (2006) *Development Brokers and Translators: the Ethnography of Aid and Agencies*

illustrate success (such as the number of WSCGs and the number of MPPAs) GHNP, SAHARA and the Forest Department staff were able to assert that goals to develop alternative livelihood options (through activities such as MPPAs), and to link local people to external markets for medicinal plants, were in fact successful.

In Tirthan valley, the preferred ecodevelopment project participants were “local forest dependent villagers”, regardless of the fact that local populations were heavily involved in agricultural cultivation and were keen to decrease their reliance on forested lands to fulfil their livelihood requirements. Meanwhile poor low-caste village people and migrant groups did not have the capital or networks necessary to participate in agricultural activities and continued to rely on forests to meet their subsistence needs. These categories – “rural women” and “forest dependent villagers” – presented the problem with a prescribed solution and gave legitimacy to actions by development agencies and other intervening bodies that assisted the project proponents in achieving desired results (Long & Van der Ploeg 1989). They also legitimized some people’s claims to resources while excluding others. Such categories were ‘represented as having universal legitimacy, as though they were in fact natural’ (Wood 1985:9). Wood argues that ‘labels misrepresent or more deliberately falsify the situation and role of the labelled. In that sense, labels...in effect reveal relationship of power between the giver and the bearer of a label’ (Wood:11).

Similarly, Roe (1991) has explained that simplifying assumptions, which allow policy makers to take action, are frequently set within ‘development narratives’. They are presented as a ‘story’, in which there is ‘a beginning, an end...development narratives tell scenarios not so much about what should happen as about what will happen – according to their tellers – if the events or positions are carried out as described’ (Roe 1991: 288). Irrespective of their worth, Roe points out that narratives ‘are explicitly more programmatic than myths, and have the objective of getting their hearers to believe or do something’ (1991:288). Thus narratives that simplify a multifaceted situation can facilitate decision-making processes. In the case of Tirthan valley, narratives were employed to generalise and label conservation and development concerns so that they were universally applicable with homogenous solutions.

Narratives of conservation and development, in combination with images that support a particular point of view, were held in place by the powerful, such as the

GHNP, the Forest Department and donor agency officials, and those that were considered to be weak, un-empowered or marginalized, such as rural women. The groups, positioned at opposite ends of a scale, ranging from the powerful to the powerless, had interests in the project that motivated them to intentionally misrepresent project objectives. Ecodevelopment in Tirthan valley was a “success” because it created and delivered an attractive account of the project. By creating new user groups such as VFDCs, WSCGs and the MPPAs, project proponents delivered an ideal model for market-based conservation. These groups (WSCGs and VFDCs) and their work (micro-planning, MPPAs) were used to explain any changes in attitudes and practices towards the use and conservation of medicinal plants (Mosse 2005). For example when government officials, NGOs and donor agency officials came to visit WSCG members in the MPPA, women explained why they felt it was important for them to be diligent in maintaining and protecting their MPPA; the WSCG members went on to explain why the MPPAs have been instrumental in empowering them. It was when these women emphasized that the MPPAs were theirs by using the words like “my” or “ours” that they were successful in capturing their audience’s (donor representatives and government officials) attention and buy-in. The resulting interpretation was that the project was in fact successful because women have taken ownership, are committed, and empowered. WSCG members were well aware that these types of claims left visitors with the feeling that the project was a worthwhile investment. An obvious visual tool used to create project success was positioning women as key figures in conservation and development. The MPPA process was a success because of its explicit attention to empowering women, relying on the general depiction of rural women as marginalised and the most vulnerable members of village society. WSCG members spoke highly about the benefits of conservation to donor and government officials, and to film crews documenting MPPA success. In doing so they were contributing to, and supporting, project rationale in order to secure benefits associated with the project; in a different context these very same women expressed very different opinions¹¹⁶ and brought forth very different experiences.

Hirschmann’s (1968) *Development Projects Observed* explains that

¹¹⁶ A funding agency had come to fill the WSCG members and their work in MPPAs. The women spoke passionately and forcefully out their interest in MPPAs. This was very different from what I had heard from them throughout the year – almost all had told me that the project was a burden, and a waste of time.

development programmes and policies are dependent on a set of simple and naïve assumptions, which in most instances have not been validated about the problem¹¹⁷, and requires action and an approach that must deliver success. The ecodevelopment project was ultimately considered a success because it created a favourable depiction of conservation and development, offering images, actions and products that symbolized success to key decision makers. The problem was presented: forests were being degraded; more specifically, endangered medicinal plants were being over-harvested by local villagers. Solutions were identified and then implemented by a range of governmental, NGO and local actors. These solutions included: developing viable alternatives for forest dependent local populations, those that encourage conservation while also providing an income; and involving village women, because “they are the poorest” and most vulnerable. The project established indicators that demonstrated success to external reviewers and observers; as explained in Chapter 6 the number of MPPAs and WSCGs were key indicators for this project. Scripts written by the GHNP and Forest Department allowed these agencies and other agency actors, such as donors and NGOs, to coordinate actions and activities so that success could in fact be created. The number of uncertainties, agendas and priorities make it difficult to produce project success without a script to guide key actors (Hoben 1995). Mosse explains:

In a sense all development programmes work politically through interpretation and the creative capacity of policy to connect economic and historical processes of change to its normative schemes. This allows villagers and fieldworkers, as well as bureaucrats and government advisors, to collude, in making privileged knowledge and technology (often outsiders’ knowledge and technology) the authors of history; a kind of history whose causal chains lead back to managed budgets (Mosse 2005:232).

There were consequences to the way the project for conservation and development around medicinal plants worked in Tirthan valley. The desire to preserve the ecodevelopment model and label it a success solidified existing power imbalances, such as those between resident villagers and migrant workers, between well-off and poor, or between high-caste and low-caste. Another consequence was that the bottom-up approach was promptly let go for a top-down approach. In an

¹¹⁷ In Chapter 2, I also make this point about the deforestation and degradation rhetoric prevalent in the Himalayas.

effort to ensure that the project progressed forward and was indeed a success, Forest Department and GHNP officials stepped in to ensure funds and training were provided to local village people and that the project was successfully empowering women and managing forests. However, the Forest Department and GHNP officials did not feel that they were enforcing project mandates from the top; in their opinion, they were facilitating and supporting project objectives so that local village people could realize project benefits, and improve their standard of living. When asked if they felt that the project took a top-down approach they all felt “no, this project is most definitely working from the bottom-up, a grassroots approach; local people are telling us what they need from our end, and we working hard to meet their needs”. The unintentional top-down approach then ensured that SAHARA, VFDCs, and WSCGs complied with donor’s criteria for success. This finding was in line with my discussion and analysis in Chapter 3, where I showed how goals for decentralization often take a centralized approach in efforts to produce desired processes (in this case micro-planning) and outcomes. In Chapter 3, I also described a meeting in which the CF for Kullu explained that the reason for using the phrase “poverty reduction” was to appease donors and access funding available under this particular objective. Thus the project for conservation, development and trade in forest products reflected external agendas instead of reflecting realities of people and organizations. Existing hierarchies ensured that village people and SAHARA staff agreed to donor objectives for medicinal plant conservation and trade.

In Chapter 6, I presented my conversations with SAHARA staff that worked daily to negotiate policy objectives, donor goals and village people’s priorities. I also drew attention to the difficulty SAHARA staff had in voicing their apprehensions with the MPPA project, and showed that SAHARA staff ultimately gave in and complied with the GHNP and donor policy objectives. They were unable to stand up to project proponents because a great deal was at stake: the GHNP and Forest Departments staff’s reputation, international donor interest and financial support, and SAHARA staff’s position within village hierarchy and politics. The result of this was that the conservation and development project did not reflect the organizational and social reality of the people residing in Tirthan valley, but rather it reflected donor agendas for market-based forest conservation. If SAHARA wanted to secure funds, it was essential for them to portray their actions in terms of the favoured model – in this case ecodevelopment. In the few instances when SAHARA staff

voiced their concerns and apprehensions about the MPPA project to Forest Department and GHNP officials, they were quickly brushed away with the explanation that these types of initiatives take time and foresight. Mosse (2005) observed a similar dismissal of NGO concern; he describes this encounter:

The members of an experienced NGO deliberately place themselves outside IBRFP's interpretive community; they confront the model. Defy the representation, disoblige the donor, resist dependence and refuse to 'overstate what is possible'. Their politics refuses collaboration across a chasm of meaning. IBRFP staff do not know how to respond. Later, when the visitors have left, over coffee a senior manager, entirely without irony, dismisses the NGO's point of view as 'wholly idealistic'. Not for the first time I have sense that in development, experience and practice are compelled to return to stable policy representations even if these are deceiving blueprints proclaiming innovation (2005:236).

Images of communities living in harmony, actively participating and benefiting from development projects is misleading and hinders practical and relevant intervention strategies. These images did not provide a complete depiction of people's everyday reality. This is not to suggest that these images have no value in a policy context. In some circumstances, idealised images of local populations effectively managing resources, utilizing traditional knowledge, equitable processes and robust social networks may be useful as it can make way for strategically positioning policy objectives (Li 1996). Policymakers may be able to use accounts and images of success to counter widespread narratives, such as the need for increased state control of natural resources. Idealised representations can provide a valid framework for alternative approaches and thus play a significant role in transforming existing policies and new program directions (Li 1996). It is important not to dismiss the fact that local actor's can and do have a hand in creating a "community in harmony with their natural environment" image. Local actors often choose to take this approach when there are on-going political struggles over resources and power is unevenly distributed. Idealised versions of community engaging in institutional processes allows for attention to be taken away from external development interventions that have not succeed in addressing real life situations of rural transformation. Instead, they 'offer material and symbolic resources for use in the on-going renegotiation of social relations' (Mosse 1997:500).

This dissertation is centred on developing an understanding of how concerns for, and interests in, conservation, development and trade are played out. The intention is not to propose a solution or strategy outlining the most appropriate course of action. My approach to this research places emphasis on the importance of structures and systems that shape relationships between communities and within communities and the context in which development initiatives take place. It stresses the importance of understanding development as a process embedded in societal contexts and relational structures. It is necessary to view these elements as integral to understanding development interventions. I move beyond looking at the *practice* of brokering and negotiating development interventions to provide a combined approach that includes critical aspects of political economy and history to examine how power and the politics of reproduction and transformation influence practice. While Lewis and Mosses' work provides much needed attention to how development policy is practiced, I push forward to provide an analysis not only of development as a practice but also as a normative idea.

To sum up I demonstrate the enormous potential of ethnography. Unlike academics that separate the study of policy and situated practices, I showed that close attention to a melting pot of issues offers insight into how conservation and development programs are configured by both the forces that envisage them in boardrooms and offices around the world, and those that broker them in villages and communities. Reviewing documents and research with an ethnographic lens gave me critical insight into rationales and forms of knowledge. In this dissertation, utilizing an ethnographic approach, I explored how subjectivities were produced in complex conjectures where multiple powers coincide. I brought to light how critical practices emerged and are shaped and influenced by political economy, political ecology and historical interactions between state and society, and how they provoked new attempts to govern. By expanding the study to incorporate political economy, political ecology, and colonial history I was able to include rich insights of people at the receiving end of development and conservation interventions.

Why is this study important or necessary? For me the study's significance lies in what it tells us about the world in which it is embedded, or as Buraway observed 'Here significance refers to societal significance. The importance of a single case lies in what it tells us about society as a whole rather than about the population of similar cases' (Buraway 1991:281). It binds existing conditions to its context, while

emphasizing wide ranging forces and the ways in which they create and uphold models of power and control. This study offers an alternative to a more reflective, analytic and hopefully, effective development intervention.

CHAPTER 8 REFERENCES AND WORKS CITED

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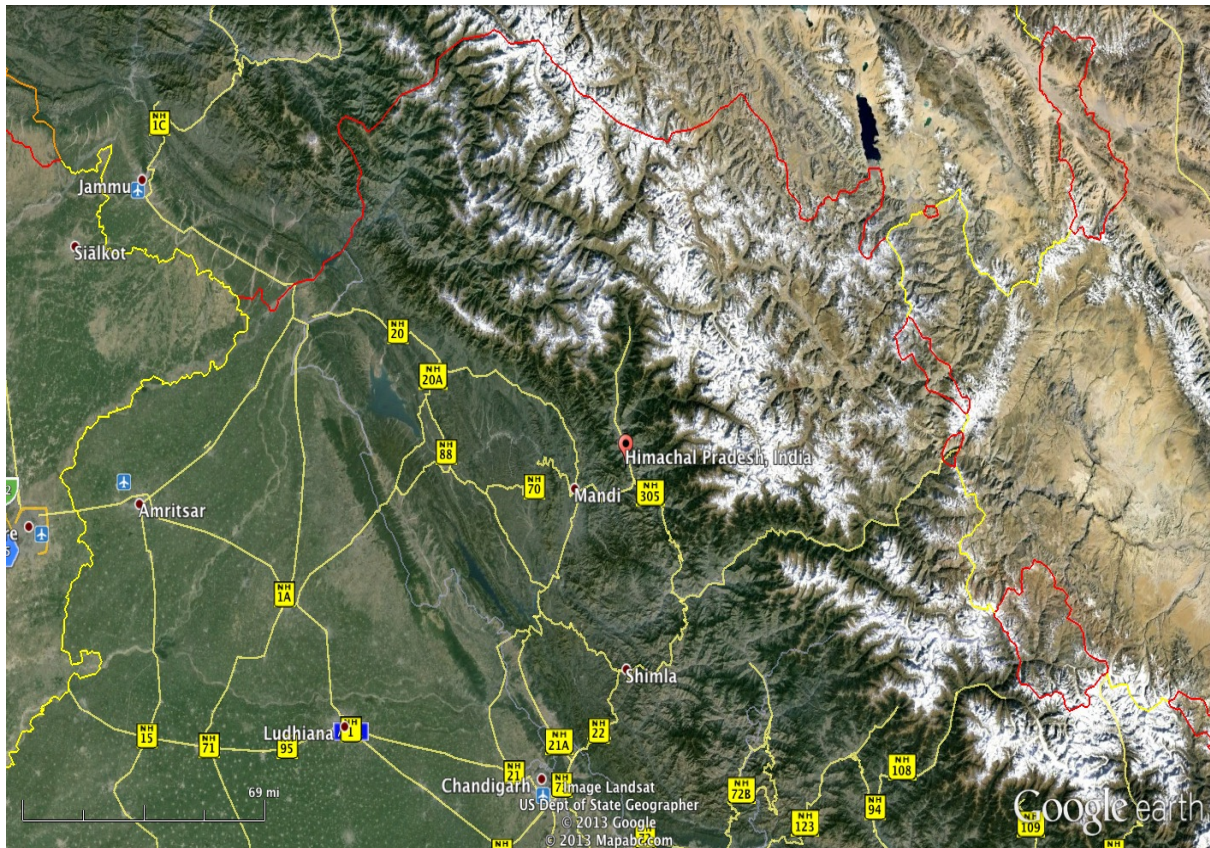
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APPENDIX A
MAP OF DISTRICTS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

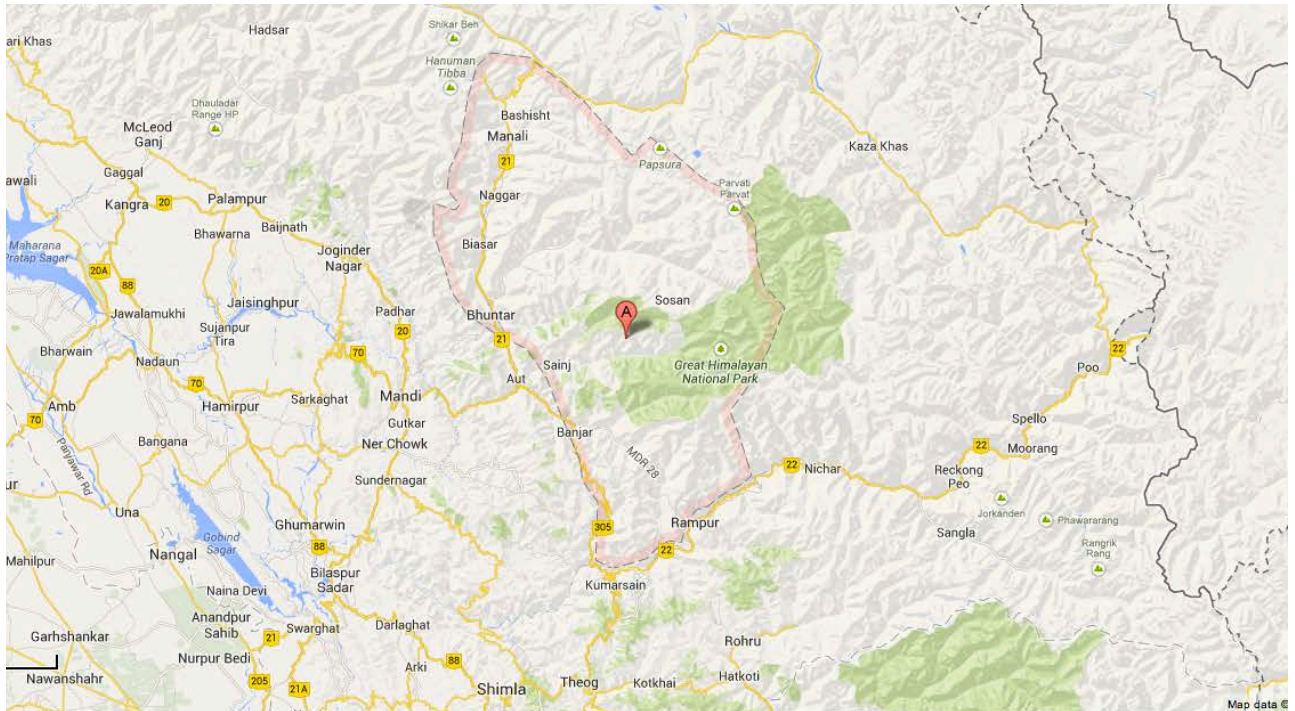


Source: Google Maps (date site visited November 18, 2013)

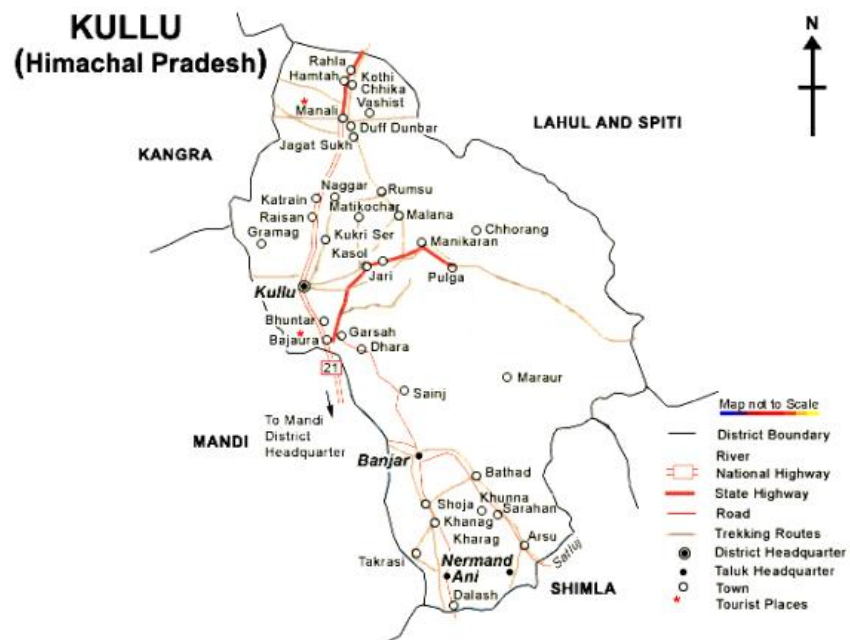


Source: <http://maps.newkerala.com/Himachal-Pradesh-Travel-Map.jpg>, (date site visited, November 2

APPENDIX B MAP OF KULLU DISTRICT

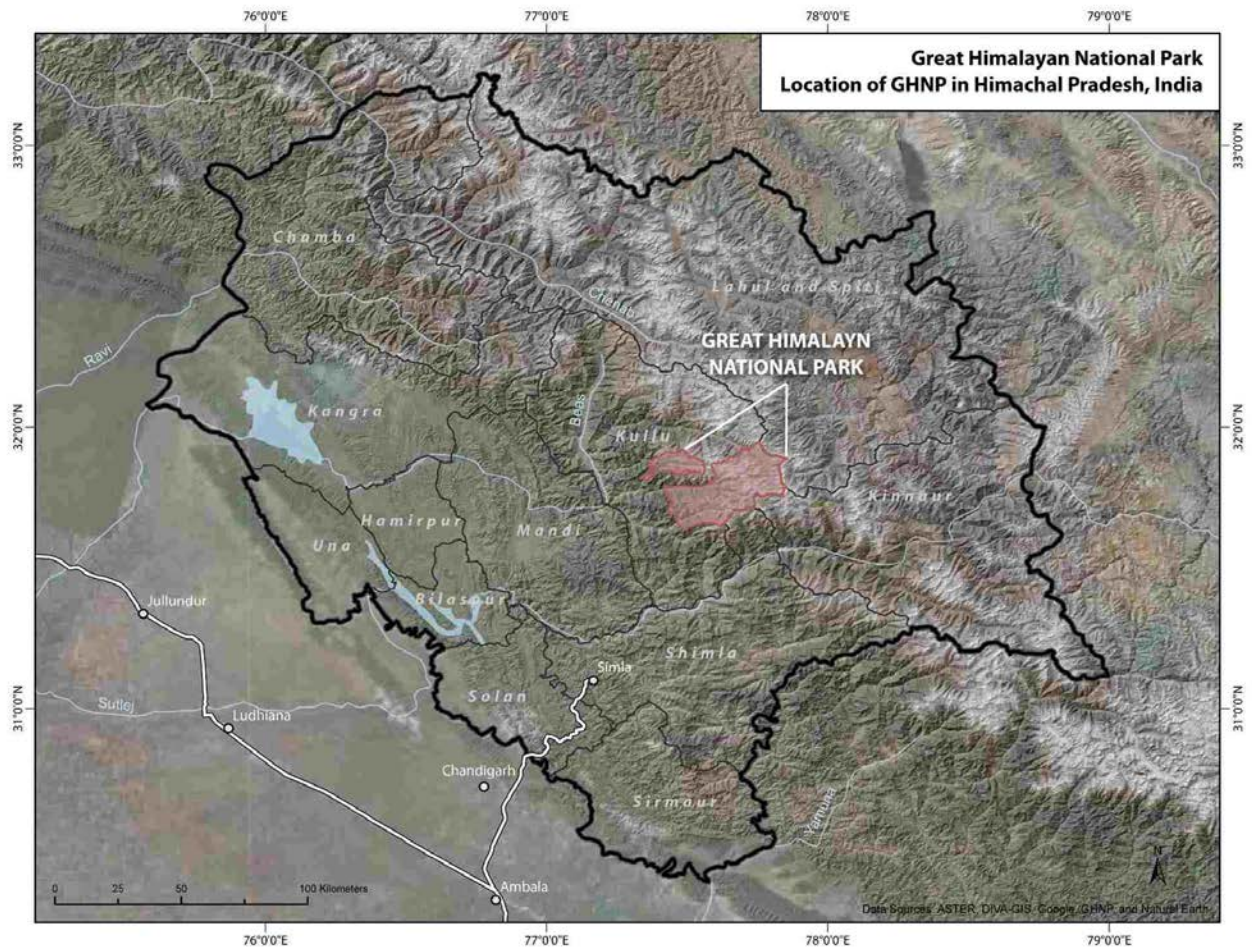


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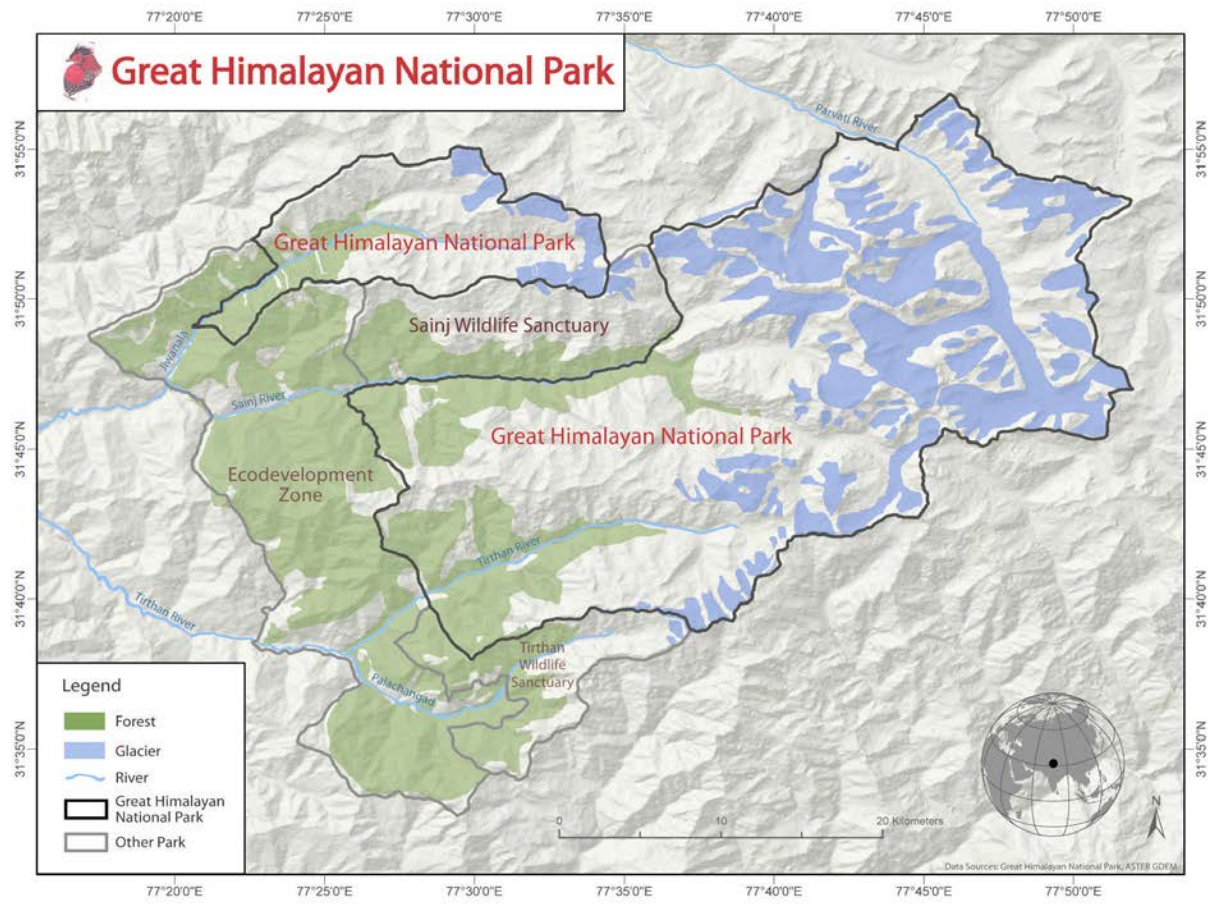


Source: <http://hpkullu.nic.in/> (date site visited August 23, 2007)

APPENDIX C **MAPs OF GREAT HIMALAYAN NATIONAL PARK (GHNP)**



Source: www.greathimalayanationalpark.com (date site visited October 23, 2013)



Source: www.greathimalayanationalpark.com (date site visited October 23, 2013)

APPENDIX D

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADEH DEPARTMENT OF FORETS

NO. FFE-B-G (9)-9/94-II Dated Shimla-2 the 28th February, 2003

NOTIFICATION

In exercise of the powers conferred under sub-section (2) of section 2 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Governor, Himachal Pradesh is pleased to appoint Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh is pleased to appoint Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh as Forest Officer to carry-out the purpose of rule 11 of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Produce Transit (Land Routes) Rules 1978 for the issuance of pass for transport of minor forest produce collected from the forests in the concerned panchayat, subject to the conditions that the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Produce Transit (Land Routes) Rules, notified vide Notification No. Fts. (A)-3-1/77, dated 20.11.1978 and published in the Rajpatra, Himachal Pradesh (Extra Ordinary) dated 5th March, 1978 as amended from time to time by the Government shall be adhered to.

The Governor, Himachal Pradesh is further pleased to order that the Pradhans of the concerned Panchayat shall issue pass for the item/species numbering 37 as listed in (ANNEXURE-A) to this Notification as per export fee prescribed therein as the fee so realized shall form the revenue of the Gram Panchayats.

The Governor, Himachal Pradesh is further pleased to order that the Forest Guard of the area shall make recommendations to issue pass after verifying that the species for which such pass is to the issued are not banned for export and that the species are extracted from the prescribed area in the approved extraction cycle, and that the extraction has been done in a sustainable manner and has not caused any ecological or environmental damage. No adherence to the above conditions may debar a Pradhan from issuing the pass for export and in such a case the powers shall revert to the concerned officer of the Forest Department who was exercising these powers prior to issuance of this Notification.

By Order

Principal Secretary (Forests) to the Government of Himachal Pradesh

APPENDIX E

LIST OF MEDICINAL HERBS AND OTHER NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCE ON WHICH CONTROL IS GIVEN TO THE CONCERNED PANCHAYAT

Botanical Name	Local Name	Export Fee (Rs. per quintal)
<i>Ainslea aptera</i>	Sath jhori	50/-
<i>Morechella exculanta</i>	Gochi	10,000/-
<i>Picrorhiza Kurro</i>	Karu	540/-
<i>Aconitum heterophyllum</i>	Patish	600/-
<i>Valeriana wallichii</i>	Nihani	600/-
<i>Diosoria deltoidea</i>	Shingli Mingli	400/-
<i>Podophyllum hexandrum</i>	Hat panja	6000/-
<i>Jurinea macrocephala</i>	Dhoop	500/-
<i>Viola serpens</i>	Banafsha	1340/-
<i>Angalica Glauca</i>	Chora	125/-
<i>Valeriana hardwichii</i>	Mush bala	600/-
<i>Thallctruim Spp.</i>	Mamiri	335/-
<i>Thymus sephylum</i>	Ban ajwain	100/-
<i>Potentilla neapensis</i>	Dori	40/-
<i>Polygonatum verticillatum</i>	Salm Mishri	1000/-
<i>Pistachla integerina</i>	Kakarsinghi	1000/-
<i>Banium persium</i>	Kala Zira	2000/-
<i>Selinium vaginistrum</i>	Butkesh	400/-
<i>Tinespora cordifolia</i>	Gloe	100/-
<i>Acorus Calamus</i>	Buch	130/-
<i>Pinus wallichiana</i>	Kail cones	1000/-
<i>Corardiana heterophylla</i>	Bichu Buti	150/-
<i>Rhododendron Spp</i>	Brass Phool	150/-
<i>Abies webbiana</i>	Taispatra	85/-
<i>Adiantum lanulatum</i>	Dasgtuli	80/-

